Students strike for climate action!

Gender justice and dismantling patriarchy
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Gene editing experts call for a moratorium
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Assassination of Sergio Rojas in Costa Rica
Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean (ATLAC) denounces and condemns the assassination Sergio Rojas, a Costa Rican indigenous defender of indigenous peoples’ rights and defender of the People of the Salitre territory in the south of Costa Rica who was throughout his lifetime an unyielding fighter for indigenous peoples’ autonomy and self-determination who stood up to confront the land-grabbers.

His murder was perpetrated on the night of Monday 18th March in Sergio’s home in the community of Yeri, where the defender of territorial rights was shot 15 times. Hours before his assassination, together with other members of the indigenous community, he filed complaints with the Public Prosecutor’s Office regarding the usurpation of land by non-indigenous persons in their territories, and the constant threats they have suffered for several years without any effective response from the Costa Rican authorities.

This horrible crime took place despite the precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) for Salitre, a fact that has shocked the indigenous peoples and social movements in the Mesoamerican country and the entire Latin American region.

As an environmental organization committed to the pursuit of environmental, social, economic and gender justice, working for peoples’ rights and the rights of defenders of territories, ATLAC expresses our solidarity with the Costa Rican people, the indigenous communities and the extended family of Sergio Rojas.

We also call on the government of Costa Rica and the competent authorities and institutions to expedite the investigations to find the intellectual and material perpetrators of this grim crime. We claim it is critical that clear explanations be given as to why indigenous peoples and their representatives, as in the case of Sergio, who are exposed to permanent violence due to their struggle for justice and the defense of their rights, do not have the special protection they are entitled to have, which is also granted to them by the precautionary measures issued by the IACHR.

We believe the only way to prevent the repetition of cases such as Sergio’s and the continued actions of extermination against peoples and their rights to self-determination and their territories is combating impunity and enforcing strict compliance with the rights to autonomy of indigenous peoples in Costa Rica, based on the effective action of the State.

www.foe.org/featuress/condemnation-assassination-sergio-rojas-costa-rica

FoE Melbourne’s Radical Renovation is underway!

For 45 years, Friends of the Earth Melbourne has been a hub for creative action planning, workshops, campaign into meetings and meetings of activists, defending and defending for social and environmental justice. With more people than ever getting involved in environmental issues, we have started to rock the foundations of our humble home on Smith Street! The space is literally starting to fall apart around us.

In 2018, we secured a grant to help us renovate and work started over the summer break with essential safety upgrades (repaired floors, wiring, and getting to work on the kitchen). There’s just one problem ... we blew the budget. No work has been done on the space for nearly two decades, so costs for the first stage of the project have exceeded all our expectations.

With 13 collectives and many volunteers relying on the space to use, daily, we need your help to get this project finished, so that we can get back to the job of campaigning for social and environmental justice.

There’s a reason we haven’t spent money on the space until now. As a grassroots group without a huge cash flow, we put as many resources as possible into supporting community activism for climate action. And with good reason. Investing in community and volunteers has won us a Victorian Renewable Energy Target, banned fracking in Victoria, protected the Strzelecki forests and much, much more! All with people power! Please help us get back to the work we are great at!

The renovations are underway, but with increasing costs, every penny we spend over budget will detract from spending on the really important stuff – like shutting down the fossil fuel industry and protecting the last of Victoria’s precious old growth forests.

Please make a tax-deductible donation to help us finish our Radical Renovation at www.chuffed.org/project/radicalreno or www.melbourne.foe.org.au/donate
Tropical Cyclone Idai is regarded as one of the worst tropical cyclones on record to affect Africa and the Southern Hemisphere as a whole. The storm caused catastrophic damage in multiple nations, leaving more than 400 people dead and hundreds more missing. Justica Ambiental (Environmental Justice) Mozambique - the Friends of the Earth member group in that country - said in response to the devastating impacts of the cyclone: “We in Mozambique didn’t create the climate crisis but our people are dying due to more intense weather events like Cyclone Idai, which hit Mozambique and neighbouring countries, and causing utter devastation and suffering.

The people of central Mozambique need emergency relief from the floods. We need solidarity.

“...we also need the whole world - especially rich countries - to stop dirty energy and stop funding fossil fuel extraction and dams in our countries! We need Climate Justice!”

Justice Ambiental: https://ja.icexchange.wordpress.com/
www.facebook.com/jaicchange

Cyclone Idai approaching Mozambique just after peak intensity on March 14.
**Act on Climate update: The push for bold climate action in 2019**

Foil Melbourne’s Act on Climate collective is rested, recharged and ready for another big year. Before we Bill you in on our priorities in 2019, it’s worth noting our impact during the Victorian state election year. Our sustained campaign to hold the Liberal Party to account for a head-in-the-sand approach to climate change had a huge impact. The absence of a climate policy is considered a key reason why the Coalition hemorrhaged votes in the November election. In his first press conference, new opposition leader Michael O’Brien noted the need to engage with climate policy and has appointed David Morris as the Coalition’s first Shadow Minister for Climate Change.

In an acknowledgment that our call for investment in climate action is being heard by Labor, Minister for Climate Change Lily D’Ambrosio recently announced a $1 million grant scheme for regions to investigate change impacts. Yet a greater level of investment is needed.

Now the dust has settled from the state election we’re returning our focus securing bold and ambitious climate action on the horizon. Our priorities in 2019:

1. Finding the front lines of climate change impacts. The communities affected by coal power generation, those resisting new fossil fuel projects, and those benefitting from the transition to renewable energy are well known. But a voice missing from the debate are the communities already facing climate impacts. In 2019, Act on Climate will be undertaking detective work to unearth communities impacted by climate change, amplifying their voices, and getting them organised and on the radar of practitioners.

2. Bold and ambitious climate targets in Victoria. Almost a decade ago, climate campaigners secured the passage of the Victorian Climate Change Act. In 2017 the act was strengthened, legislating a target of zero-net emissions by 2050 and requirement to set interim Emissions Reduction Targets every five years. Today’s climate campaigners have a responsibility to engage in the process and push for bold and ambitious Emissions Reduction Targets. The state government will soon resume the process of setting Victoria’s first climate targets for 2025 and 2030.

3. Building momentum for a Climate Budget. We will continue our long-term campaign for Victoria’s first Climate Budget. The government must ramp up investment if it’s to deliver emissions cuts and protect communities from impacts. The investment in public transport, renewable energy, and infrastructure upgrades a Climate Budget would deliver will create thousands of jobs, and draws parallels to the ‘Green New Deal’ gathering momentum in the United States.

The community members that drive the Act on Climate campaign meet every Monday night to plan actions and make things happen. You’re welcome to join us at Friends of the Earth in Collingwood for an action group meeting, this week at 6pm.

Contact:leigh@foe.org.au, or 0406 516 176 www.actonclimate.org.au

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**Will Cost You Votes!**

Cleaning up corporate Australia

Julien Vincent from FoE affiliate Market Forces reported on 8 March 2019:

One way to tell we’re on the right track is when Resources Minister Matthew Canavan attacks us. Well, today he was at it again, calling Market Forces ‘the greatest hypocrite on Earth’ for living in homes that contain steel. We’d just filed a shareholder resolution on Rio Tinto, a massive producer of steel-making iron ore, which is a commodity at risk if the world is going to meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement. Rio Tinto even acknowledges it has a problem with iron ore mining, the resolution just asks the company to set targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That would limit the risk faced by the company, but also the planet’s risk of hitting runaway climate change.

And then in stumped Canavan, railing that people who had steel products were ‘hypocritical for wanting to do something about climate change, and it should be left to politicians to work it out.’ This is the same bloke who also said “now” is the time to be building new coal power stations. Um… no thanks, Matt.

All of us live in a world that is still dominated by fossil fuels and their products. We live and work in buildings that contain steel and concrete. We get around in ways that burn fossil fuels at least some of the time. We consume food that contains embedded emissions. That doesn’t make you, or me, or anyone in this movement hypocrites. It just means we need to change the system we live in. And that’s what we’re doing.

The resolution we filed with Rio Tinto is one of ten we have begun to coordinate with shareholders eager to see companies line up their actions with the goals of the Paris Agreement. In total, the companies we’re targeting (so far) are worth $607 billion, nearly 40% of the ASX 100. Together, we are pushing corporate Australia to be part of the climate solution.

www.marketforces.org.au

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**Federal ALP Policy Platform**

Robyn Wood, FoE Adelaide

The ALP met for three days in late December in Adelaide to finalise their national policy platform for the next three years. There were wins for the environment with the party promising to set up a new Federal Environment Protection Agency and new environmental laws in their first term of government. This was acted on by a grassroots campaign within the party by rank-and-file members engaged by internal volunteer lobby group the Labor Environment Action Network.

The important work of environmental organisations was acknowledged: “Labor shares the passion of local environmental conservation and health groups. Their contribution to protecting and preserving Australia’s environment and the wellbeing of all Australians is invaluable. These groups play an important role in mobilising government action on local environmental issues and are critical, active participants in broader national conversations on issues such as climate change.”

Specific mention is made in the platform that “Labor will ensure the knowledge and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are central in environment protection laws, programs and policies.”

Climate change and environmental protections are addressed in Chapter 4 - ‘Tackling climate change, securing our energy future & addressing our environmental challenges.’ On climate change the platform says: “There is no longer any credible or serious scientific doubt that human-induced climate change represents a massive risk to Australia and the world. The recent IPCC report indicates that we are experiencing a climate emergency and as a result, meaningful action on climate change is urgent, at home and internationally. Labor will take strong action on climate change to mitigate the risks and impacts of climate change on Australian society and economy, and to take advantage of the opportunities transitioning to a low pollution economy represent for workers, businesses and Australia more broadly.”

The policy on national nuclear waste has been updated to: “Labor acknowledges that radioactive waste management is a complex policy challenge that requires the highest levels of transparency and evidence. While balancing the need of the community to benefit from treatments for diseases like cancer. Accordingly, Labor will act in accordance with scientific evidence, and with full transparency, broad public input and best practice technical and consultative standards, taking into account views of traditional owners, to progress responsible radioactive waste management.”

It will be up to us to evaluate Labor’s election promises they make in reference to the policy platform during the upcoming federal election campaign.

The 309-page ALP national policy platform is posted at www.alp.org.au/about/national-platform

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150,000 students strike for climate action around Australia

An estimated 150,000 students and adult supporters across Australia joined massive, vibrant, nationwide climate strikes on March 15, in over 60 cities and towns across the nation, demanding immediate and urgent leadership from Australian politicians to tackle climate change.

Sixteen-year-old Nosrat Fareha from western Sydney said, “The turn out across Australia was nothing short of amazing. Politicians have responded with indifference to our crippling summer of record heat, bushfires and floods. It’s no wonder so many came out in support today. With the federal election around the corner, our political leaders must commit to stop the Adani coal mine, say no to new coal and gas projects and transition to 100% renewable energy by 2030. There’s no time to stand by and watch the world be consumed by climate change.”

Students are discussing further strikes if they don’t see action from politicians. Other plans include #ClimateElection KickStart meetings to make plans to pressure politicians to show climate leadership, and local climate change candidate forums where candidates will be challenged by school students to commit to stop Adani and act on climate change.

The March 15 school strikes were 10 times the size of last November’s strikes. Last November, over 15,000 Australian school students went on strike, defying Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s orders not to. A similar number hit the streets a week later, in response to Adani’s announcement it would self-fund its Carmichael mine.

A national ReachTEL poll conducted on 12 March 2019 found that a majority of Australians (54%) support the student strikers’ demands (stop Adani, no new coal and gas projects, 100% renewable energy by 2030) and of this, a sizeable number (42%) strongly support them.

The Australian school strike movement began last year when students were inspired by 15-year-old Swedish student Greta Thunberg who has been striking outside Swedish Parliament every Friday since August 2018. Thunberg said: “I often hear adults say: ‘We need to give the next generation hope’. But I don’t want your hope. I want your panic. I want you to feel the fear I do. Every day. And I want you to act. I want you to behave like our house is on fire. Because it is.”

Internationally, well over one million students took action on March 15, in about 130 countries.

More information:
- schoolstrike4climate.com
- vimeo.com/user90744430
- twitter.com/StrikeClimate
- facebook.com/pg/StrikeClimate
- flickr.com/photos/160136040@N02/albums

Top: Joss at the students’ strike for climate, Melbourne, 15 March 2019
Bottom: Students’ strike for climate, Sydney, 15 March 2019

Published by the ABC the day before the March 15 strikes:

“Politicians that have been in power for so long have let us down,” says Aisheeya Haq, 16, from western Sydney.

“They need to show us that they are willing to make changes for us and our futures.”

Aisheeya’s activism is partly inspired by the low-lying home country of her parents.

“My parents came from Bangladesh which is a country severely affected by climate change,” she says.

“Many people are losing their homes and livelihoods.”

She’s also watched her home city swelter under heatwaves in recent years.

“I live in western Sydney where the effects of climate change are also felt to quite an alarming degree,” she says.

“Climate change affects the people that contribute the least to it. When you have privilege it’s important to speak up.”

Doha has specific demands for the changes she wants to see from government.

“We want the Labor Party and the Liberal Party to stop Adani, not allow any new fossil projects to be set up, and commit to 100 per cent renewables by 2030,” she says.

“If action isn’t taken then this movement is only going to grow and continue as more people get frustrated by the inaction.”

Published by the ABC on the day of the March 15 strikes:

Doha Khan, a student from Adelaide, says she’s “very lucky” to have the support of both her parents and her school to go on strike.

“I think a big reason why my mum and dad are so supportive is that they’ve always pressed that as people who have privilege it is our job to speak out for people who do not,” she says.

“Climate change affects the people that contribute the least to it. When you have privilege it’s important to speak up.”

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“If action isn’t taken then this movement is only going to grow and continue as more people get frustrated by the inaction.”

Tully Bowtell Young, from Townsville, says the extreme weather that has lashed the city recently, is a stark example of the effects of climate change.

“The flood we just had wasn’t just a normal flood, it was a one-in-100-year event. It was a horrendous flood,” she says.

The flood hit after an extended period of drought, and Tully says it’s helped to shape conversation in city that is “quite divided on the issue of climate change.”

“Both the flooding rains and the droughts have gotten worse through the effects of climate change, and it’s easier to talk to people about climate change when they have experienced it,” she says.

Published by the ABC on the day after the March 15 strikes:

Both the flooding rains and the droughts have gotten worse through the effects of climate change, and it’s easier to talk to people about climate change when they have experienced it,” she says.
The climate change strike: from a student who was there

Acadia Rose

So here’s me, amid a crowd of fired up adolescents and children, facing what could be the downfall of everything we’ve ever known, climate change.

The climate strike was a worldwide event that was held in over 100 countries, and in 2000 locations. The movement gained massive crowds in 2018, after Greta Thunberg, a Swedish 16-year-old, inspired many in her profound speech at the UN Climate Change Conference, stating she’s learned that you never are too small to make a difference.

The students I marched with felt it was important to adopt the same hunger for change by not attending school for one day, to march and protest with fellow community members instead.

Many of us faced disappointment and frustration from teachers, politicians and administrators for taking the day off school.

Yet, all we felt it was important to recognise that our planet is far more important than any grade. This made the issue far more political and rebellious than it has been in the past, but many students said although they don’t want it to be a political statement and more of a human rights movement, they feel there is no other choice.

On this steaming hot day, we heard speeches from different environmentalists and carers of the land, followed by chants and songs to liberate the crowd. We then walked down to the beach, signs in hand and made a formation spelling out “SOS” on the sand. This was recorded on drones and shared over various news channels that night.

Being one of the protesters I can say I saw it was quite simply more powerful and inspiring than any day I’ve ever had at school! I think I learned so much about our roles and rights as citizens in a free society and about our obligations in a democracy by being involved. Education is about more than marks.

Although the climate strike is not about one particular event or scenario, encapsulating many different situations worldwide, the climate event I attended (on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast) was heavily focused on a potential local horror, the Adani mine.

This issue further engaged the marchers as it is something most people are heavily against and would hate to see go through. It gave just one example of what appalling projects our politicians would hate to see go through. It gave just one example of what appalling projects our politicians would hate to see go through.

I knew how it feels to be ignored. I’ve called local MPs, only to be hung up on when I told them my age. Emails that I’ve taken time to carefully write, urging Coalition and Labor politicians to publicly denounce the Adani coal mine, are met with platitudinous auto-generated responses.

I realised that together we can make an impact, as Thunberg preached, we are the future – we cannot sit back and watch as our own future slips out in force – protesting for our future – but also to see how many of the rally organisers were young women, from schools around the state.

But why should girls more widely be especially concerned? Because girls and young women face disproportionate impacts from climate change. Yes, that right – climate change is sexist. The gendered aspect to climate change is complex and pressing.

Leading girls’ rights agency Plan International’s work with research bodies around the world such as Stockholm Environment Institute in Thailand has revealed that as the impacts of global warming worsen, women and girls are at higher risk of physical, psychological and social harm.

Climate change magnifies global inequality to a terrifying degree – as weather events and natural disasters worsen in strength and duration, so too do famines, droughts, forced migration, climate-fuelled conflict and disease epidemics. In turn, all of these events disproportionately affect girls and young women.

Girls and young women in developing countries are the first to suffer from lack of food and water, as they are ‘often the last in the family to eat and the first to go hungry when food is in short supply,’ according to a 2018 report from Plan International and SEI.

When families face economic hardship from drought or disaster, girls are at greater risk of being pulled out of school to help the household and save money. Their burden of chores becomes greater and more dangerous when they have to journey further for clean water.

Girls displaced by disaster or conflict face particular risks when migrating or living in refugee camps. They may be exposed to violence from other people living in the camps, soldiers, or criminal networks of traffickers and gangs.

As Shellie Joseph, one of the organisers of the Sunshine Coast strike stated “no one is benefiting from this,” meaning the Adani mine has no winners. And we reckoned she couldn’t be more right. The Adani mine would destroy our economy, reputation and most importantly, ruin the lives of every-day Australians and their resources and climate.

I feel very grateful I was able to be a part of such an amazing movement, surrounded by people who are all passionate about caring for this planet so we are so lucky to inhabit.

To be one of them and part of a worldwide movement was the best lesson. This is why I’m striking to support girls around the globe.


Climate change is sexist: why I’m striking to support girls around the globe

Lauren Lancaster

March 15 – Around the world, young people are going on strike in reaction to the most pressing issue of our time: global warming. As the generation facing the full impacts of climate change, we’re urging decisive, radical change.

In my own city, school students are going on strike, and girls are leading the charge – the School Strikes for Climate movement was started by 16-year-old Swedish student Greta Thunberg, outside the Swedish Parliament. I attended the rally in Sydney last November, and will be there again today. What struck me was not just how motivating it was to see young people out in force – protesting for our future – but also to see how many of the rally organisers were young women, from schools around the state.

Child marriage also rises in times of crisis, with families sometimes using it as a way to ease economic hardship or to protect girls from violence and abuse. It is clear that climate change is an intergenerational equity issue. Lack of action now will have serious implications on the rights of future generations of children, particularly girls.

Nations must include girls in decision-making and policy processes around climate change. For too long, we have been left out of these discussions – our voices ignored, despite the fact that we stand to lose among the most.

I know how it feels to be ignored. I’ve called local MPs, only to be hung up on when I told them my age. Emails that I’ve taken time to carefully write, urging Coalition and Labor politicians to publicly denounce the Adani coal mine in Queensland, are met with platitudinous auto-generated responses. Media have since reported that neither major party will leave coal behind for the next election.

Climate change is the single most pressing global challenge that affects us all. It’s already wreaking havoc on the health, safety and future of girls around the world. We can lessen the impacts but we need to act now, before it’s too late.

Young people will not be silenced. We will not listen to those who tell us we should stay in school. We will keep striking, advocating and making our voices resonance. By calling our MPs, going to school strikes, joining youth climate and social justice organisations and educating ourselves, we are showing politicians that we will not stop until radical policy change is achieved.

We are the future – we cannot sit back and watch as our own future slips away in front of our eyes.

Lauren Lancaster is a youth activist with Plan International Australia.

Reprinted from New Matilda, 15 March 2019, www.newmatilda.com
International Women’s Day needs to return to its radical roots

Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah and Ana Inés Abelenda

March 5, 2019 – The theme for International Women’s Day this year doesn’t resonate with us. #BalanceForBetter brings to mind slow gradual change, and assumes that if you provide women and girls with equal access then the society will automatically be better. We know that’s false.

Access to a broken capitalist system that privileges the richest 1% over the rest of the world means that the most marginalised communities (including women, girls, trans and gender non-conforming people) exist in unjust, precarious and fragile societies. This coupled with the increasing privatisation of what should be common resources for everyone (including the basics of land and water), as well as the corporate takeover of many public services endangers the lives and wellbeing of poor people.

In a recent submission to the United Nations Secretary General, the African Women’s Development Network for Communications (FEMNET) and the Association for Women’s Rights in Development stated: “Neoliberal economic policies promoted around the globe by a growing majority of governments with the support and pressure of international financial institutions (including through conditional loans), have intensified the commodification of life through privatization of basic public services and natural resources.”

This corporate takeover of services meant to benefit everyone, of the health and education sectors in particular, primarily affect women and girls.

In 2017 report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, stated: “Women and girls are frequently excluded from education. Frequently, those are the classroom’s best students who are the first to invest in education.”

The rights of girls to quality education, particularly those from the most underprivileged communities, are negatively affected when they are forced to pay for education, and have to choose which resources and girls. In a 2017 report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, stated: “Women and girls are frequently excluded from education. Frequently, those are the classroom’s best students who are the first to invest in education.”

This trend of Government reaching out to the private sector to manage the education sector has also been witnessed in other parts of West Africa including Liberia.

There is no doubt that significant investments in the education sectors are required. Sadly, governments in the Global South are looking for these resources in the wrong places. The landmark report by the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa (also known as the Bahrein report) indicated that Africa is losing more than US$50 billion per year in illicit financial flows. As highlighted in a report by the Association for Women’s Rights in Development, illicit financial flows have a severe impact on the development of the continent. These resources that are lost to the continent should rather be harnessed and invested into the social sector, including education and health. Privatization of social services and reduced social protection is at the heart of South Africa’s wave of neoliberal governments promoting austerity policies that deepen structural gender inequalities. Coupled with the rise of a conservative right in South Africa, including Brazil’s fascist new government – feminist movements from the South understand this is no time for moderate calls for equality and balance.

In Uruguay, the #8M call to action states: “Ante el fascismo, más feminismo” (“In front of fascism, we need more feminism!”). It is a call for international feminist solidarity to resist daily threats that aim to bring us back centuries when it comes to social and gender justice and rights. It is also a warning that feminist movements are forging new realities not only about equality, but about radical change.

So on this International Women’s Day we call for a return to its radical roots centred on workers’ rights and justice. This doesn’t call for balance. It calls for a radical transformation of society based on the twin principles of equity and justice.

Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah is Director of Information, Communications and Media, Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID). Ana Inés Abelenda is Economic Justice Coordinator at AWID. www.awid.org

Gender justice and dismantling patriarchy

Women are disproportionately affected by environmental injustice, climate change, disasters and the exploitation of Nature. This is especially so for women of colour, peasant and indigenous women. LBGTQ women and women workers. Despite this, women are not victims. We are fighters. Women are protagonists in the defense of our territories and the fight for autonomy over our bodies, lives and labour force.

Friends of the Earth (FoE) International believes that social and environmental justice is only achievable through a radical transformation of our societies. We seek justice and freedom from all systems that devalue and exploit women, peoples and the environment, including patriarchy, racism, (neo)colonialism, class oppression, capitalism and heteronormativity.

These systems cannot be tackled in isolation. They reinforce one another in the constant drive for material accumulation and for the benefit and privilege of elites in society.

FoE is committed to working for gender justice throughout our federation and for the dismantling of patriarchy in our societies. We see grassroots, anti-capitalist feminism as a key theoretical concept and political tool in the fight for women’s autonomy, equality between women and men, between peoples and between people and nature. We aim to show, in practice, that this feminism can and is being constructed from the grassroots up. It is relevant to all women and men and it is representative of regional diversity and different realities.

Members of FoE’s Gender Justice and Dismantling Patriarchy Working Group explain why this work is so important to our struggle for system change:

“We have to fight for gender justice and to dismantle patriarchy in our federation because in our territories, countries and regions we suffer from all forms of oppressions, injustice, inequality and violence against women that degrade our lives and prevent us from advancing as a civilization. System change, as we have defined it within Friends of the Earth International, requires new kinds of relationships between men and women, with equal social, political, economic and cultural opportunities.” — Silvia Quirao, CESTA / FoE El Salvador

“For me, ending patriarchy – especially in Africa – is like putting an end to most of the heartfelt day-to-day setbacks of women, ranging from oppression, denial of their rights and lack of power to make decisions. There is nothing for us, without us. If as a federation we say no to capitalism and its pillars, which are deeply rooted, then patriarchy that feeds into capitalism must be wiped out first to allow equal participation of all of us in the struggle.” — Peruth Atukwatse, NAPE / FoE Uganda

“Gender Justice and Dismantling Patriarchy work is the solution to the flourishing gender injustices that thrive within and around us. This work is the key to achieving a sustainable and just environment for peoples in work streams, work places, communities and planet. Women’s rights are Human Rights. We are women, we are Africans. We are Friends of the Earth. There is No System Change or Gender Justice without us!” — Rita Uwaka, ERA / FoE Nigeria

“The factors and systems that lead to the exploitation of natural resources also defend patriarchy and lead to violations against women that create injustice and inequality. Friends of the Earth International as a federation working to change systems and promote justice has to invest in dismantling all unequal and unjust power bases including patriarchy and must strive to empower women, ensure their unhindered access to natural resources and strengthen their economic, political and bodily autonomy within our organizations and societies.” — Rizwana Hasan, BELA / FoE Bangladesh

“As a female and an environmental activist, I recognize the issue of dismantling patriarchy as a key point in achieving climate justice. Capitalism relies on a patriarchal system due to the fact that it is fixated on oppressing women and subjugating their labor and their bodies for its benefit. We need to make the link between the exploitation of nature and oppression of women visible. We need to realize that if you are trying to break capitalism, that fight has to go hand in hand with dismantling patriarchy and that all of our problems with the environment, with women and trans rights, workers’ rights, they all come from the same cause and we can break it and solve it only working in solidarity side by side.” — Ivana Kulic, The Center for Environment / FoE Bosnia & Herzegovina

“Friends of the Earth International is committed to system change, fundamental to which is the fight for gender justice and the dismantling of patriarchy. We are demanding an end to the exploitation of women’s bodies and work. The only way to achieve this is through recognizing women as political subjects, ending violence against women and the denial of their rights and deconstructing the sexual division of labor, which constitutes the material basis of patriarchal exploitation and domination. In the framework of this commitment, we are continuing to build alliances with grassroots feminist organizations, with the World March of Women and with the women of the Via Campesina who, like us, are fighting for system change.” — Karin Nansen, Chair of FoE International

Activist guides
WoMin has launched three activist guides to support women and communities across Africa in their struggles for climate justice and sustainable energy futures. WoMin, launched in October 2013, is an African gender and extractives alliance, which works alongside national and regional movements, popular organisations of women, mining-impacted communities and peasants, and in partnership with other sympathetic organisations.

Here are some of our top tips:

**Women stand their ground against big coal:**
Big businesses, development banks and some governments are pushing for the expansion of coal projects in Africa. They say coal is the way to develop countries and widen African people’s access to energy. But communities are pushing back against this plan because coal is extremely harmful to people and the planet. Communities want existing coal mines and power stations to be phased out, and new coal projects stopped. Find out how women activists are leading the fight to defend their communities’ land, water and forests.

False solutions to climate change: chasing profits while the climate burns:
The world is hurtling towards a climate crisis in which Africa and particularly peasant and working-class women will be hardest hit. Yet we are being fed corporate-driven solutions that are about making more profit at the expense of people and planet and about avoiding regulation to curb emissions. These false solutions will delay putting real, urgent and effective solutions into place. But women are fighting back against false solutions in defence of land, water, forests, families and communities. Learn more about the different kinds of false solutions and how feminist movements are rallying for the ‘right to say NO’ to these solutions while building movements and opportunities for a just and sustainable future! The false solutions described in this report are: carbon trading, clean coal, reducing deforestation, nuclear energy, megadams and agrofuels, nuclear energy, megadams, sustainable energy futures. WoMin, launched on 9 March 2017, is an international women’s rights and environmental organisation of women, mining-impacted communities and peasants.

The three activist guides are online at https://goo.gl/RTfSU2 or https://woomin.org/au/

**Free Stella Nyanzi**
On Saturday 9th March, a small group of activists from Ghana, concerned by the continued incarceration of the Ugandan feminist activist Dr Stella Nyanzi, rallied by the symbolic national independence Square to raise awareness on the dangers of remaining quiet to injustice.

Despite living in an era of whistleblower movements and pushing to hold our leaders accountable, there has been a significant decrease in the promotion of freedom and liberty of activists and human rights defenders from African countries.

For some of us with Ugandan ancestry, our relatives were not too sure how to process the Stella Nyanzi case. They are numbed and weary from the daily absences of loved ones under Museveni’s regime and disregard of human rights, but still congratulated us for taking a stand, lifting a bit of the cloak of hopelessness around Stella’s release.

When Stella Nyanzi first got arrested in April 2017, legions of her fans, supporters and activists swung into action, demanding that the Ugandan government #FreeStellaNyanzi.

She had been arrested and charged with Cyber Harassment and Offensive Communications under sections 24 and 25 of Uganda’s 2011 Computer Misuse Act. These so-called offensive communications included describing Yoweri Museveni, the President of Uganda, as a ‘pair of buttocks’.

We recognise and appreciate the activism of Dr Stella Nyanzi. In spite of being personally vilified and professionally sidelined, she does not give up, and stays true to her values. She has declared that she is continuing her resistance from prison, the least we can do is amplify her strength from our own locations.

Bring #Meloo to the fashion industry
The global #MeToo movement has put a spotlight on sexual harassment and violence in various industries including the film and music industries. It is now time for the fashion industry to address these issues within their supply chains, one organisation says.

Citing the United Nations publication %22Fashioning Change%22: How can we ensure a future of respect and safety for all?%22, one report notes that the fashion industry has a long way to go.

Women, the guardians of rivers and fighting big dams:
African governments, corporations and development banks are pushing hydroelectric dams as a clean energy alternative to fossil fuels. They say such dams do not add to climate change. They also say that by selling the electricity, big dams can earn much needed money for African countries, and that big dams will provide energy for African countries which have huge energy poverty. But the reality could not be further from the truth. Find out why big dams are not the solution for a country’s citizens and economy and how women are fighting back against big dams to protect their families, livelihoods, and communities.

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Citing the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector, Human Rights Watch (HRW) – which had launched a report in February 2019 detailing cases of sexual harassment in garment supply chains, one organisation says.

“Women shouldn’t have to choose between dignity and jobs, and the constant struggle to keep a job and put food on the table means women often feel compelled to swallow their dignity and normalise sexual harassment at work,” Aruna Kashyap from HRW’s Women’s Rights Division explained.

“Around the world, millions of women are employed by the 2.4 trillion-dollar apparel industry. But because of their sex, they face numerous challenges including sexual and verbal harassment.

While countries such as India and Pakistan do have laws around sexual harassment at work, they are often poorly enforced. Additionally, 99 countries do not have specific legal remedies for sexual harassment in employment.

Bring the full story at: http://www.ipsnews.net/2019/03/bring-#Meloo-fashion-industry/
Dirty deeds: how to stop Australian miners abroad being linked to death and destruction

Julia Dehm

Australian companies dominate African mining. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade counts 175 ASX-listed companies operating in 59 African countries.1 Professional services company PwC reckons there are more than 200, and that “a golden age of Australia-Africa relations has begun.” But Australian miners also arguably stand implicated in both human rights and environmental abuses in pursuit of Africa’s mineral wealth.

The Human Rights Law Centre has documented serious human rights abuses in the overseas operations of a number of prominent Australian companies.2 The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists has linked Australian mining operations to deaths, destruction and displacement across Africa.3 Right now, the spotlight is on a bitter dispute between local people in the Xolobeni region on the east coast of South Africa and an Australian-created mining company that wants to excavate a strip of coastal land, 22 km long and 1.5 km wide, for titanium.

The mining company, Transworld Energy and Mineral Resources, was until 2016 a subsidiary of Australian company Mineral Commodities Limited.4 The local community’s fight against Transworld goes back more than a decade. In January, a “consultation” meeting ended with police firing stun grenades.5

In November, the mine’s opponents won an important legal battle when the High Court of South Africa (Gauteng Division, Pretoria) ruled the local community needed to be “consulted” before a mining licence is granted. But Judge Annali Basson ruled in November that customary rights were only need to be “consulted” before a mining licence is granted. But Judge Annali Basson ruled in November that customary rights were guaranteed by the Interim Protections of Informal Rights to Law Act 1996.6

This law, designed to protect those discriminated against during the apartheid era, provides that “no person may be deprived of any informed right to land without his or her consent.” On that basis the court ruled a mining right could not be granted unless the community made a communal decision to consent. The minister for mineral resources is appealing the decision.7

Conflict and consent

Transworld first sought the right to mine the Xolobeni territory in 2007. Locals formed the Amadiba Crisis Committee to oppose the mine shortly thereafter.8

After Transworld filed a new application for mining rights in March 2015, the Amadiba Crisis Committee joined together with other groups and 89 residents to claim their rights to the land according to customary law. They filed their claim in March 2016.

Around the same time the Amadiba Crisis Committee’s chairman, Sikhosiphi Radebe, was shot dead at his home.9 No one has been arrested for his murder, so it’s impossible to say what motivated his killers. But the mine proposal has led to significant conflict within the community. Some locals believe the mine will benefit them. Those opposed to the mine fear it will force them off their land, disrupt livelihoods based on agriculture and eco-tourism, and harm the community’s whole culture.

They point to the effects of similar strip-mining operations, such as Rio Tinto’s mine near Richards Bay, 400 kilometres north. The South African Human Rights Commission has documented adverse social, economic and ecological impacts across the country.10

Under South Africa’s Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, property holders only need to be “consulted” before a mining licence is granted. But Judge Annali Basson ruled in November that customary rights were guaranteed by the Interim Protections of Informal Rights to Law Act 1996.11

This law, designed to protect those discriminated against during the apartheid era, provides that “no person may be deprived of any informed right to land without his or her consent.” On that basis the court ruled a mining right could not be granted unless the community made a communal decision to consent. The minister for mineral resources is appealing the decision.12

Lacklustre accountability

Australian human rights and environmental groups called on Mineral Commodities to drop its plans for Xolobeni back in May 2016.13 They also called on the Australian government to make companies more accountable for monitoring and enforcing human rights standards in their overseas operations.

The federal government has had a “National Contact Point” for the OECD Guidelines since 2002.14 But an independent review in 2017 found the initiative “significantly lacking.”15 How the National Contact Point handled a submission from representatives of the Xolobeni community in 2013 demonstrates its limitations.16 It did not accept the complaint under the guidelines because the submission opposed all mining. This meant there was no community interest in a “mediation process that carries with it even the remotest possibility of accommodation between the mining company and local residents”.

In June 2017, the Australian government established an advisory group for implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.17 The group quickly recommended developing a national action plan, in line with international standards.18 But in October the government announced it was “not proceeding with a national action plan at this time.”

We can do better

Other countries are doing more. France has introduced a “duty of vigilance” law requiring companies ensure their supply chains respect labour and other human rights.19 In Switzerland there is a push for a constitutional amendment obliging Swiss companies to incorporate respect for human rights and the environment in all their activities.20 Canada is soon to appoint an independent Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise to investigate allegations of human rights abuses linked to Canadian corporate activity overseas.21 It’s increasingly recognised on a purely pragmatic level there are legal, reputational and financial risks if companies attempt to operate without community consent. Studies show the huge financial costs of conflicts with Indigenous communities, which can delay projects significantly.22

Australia law makers, therefore, can do both local communities overseas and domestic investors at home a favour by putting in place adequate mechanisms to ensure Australian companies cause no harm overseas.

Julia Dehm is a Lecturer at La Trobe University. She is affiliated with the Economic Justice Collective at Friends of the Earth Melbourne, and the Australian Corporate Accountability Network Reprinted from The Conversation, 23 Jan. 2019, https://theconversation.com/dirty-deeds-how-to-stop-australian-miners-abroad-being-linked-to-death-and-destruction-109407

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Gina and Twiggy’s
South American adventure

Anthony Amis

With the boom times for iron ore supposedly waning, Australia’s billionaire miners are using the capital raised from iron ore to eye-off key areas around the world in order to increase their empires. They are also after new commodities. According to Solgold/DGR Global’s Nick Mather, both Gina Rinehart and Twiggy Forrest are now claiming their place in the new iron ore. Both Rinehart and Forrest have embarked on their new international copper quest by hunting for minerals in South America. Twiggy is targeting Colombia, Ecuador and Argentina whilst Gina is having a number of migraines over her newly-established mining concessions in Ecuador.

In early 2018, FMG also stated that it was embarking on exploring for minerals in Argentina. Targeting copper, gold and lithium. To smooth relations with Argentinian officials, FMG employed the services of former captain of the Argentinean Pumas Rugby Team Agustin Pichot to be president and director of Fortescue. FMG concentrated its exploration activities in the San Juan Province in the west of the country, where it was interested in 5-5 mega-projects. Protests and concerns regarding mining in the San Juan Province are not new. Barrick Gold’s Veladero Mine, for example, has had three cyanide spills and copper workers with criminal charges laid against eight Barrick Gold employees in 2017.

If Twiggy’s adventures in South America seem mildly interesting, they are quite tame in regards to the what has been happening on one of Gina’s mining concessions in Ecuador.

Hancock Prospecting

Representatives of Gina Rinehart’s company, Hancock Prospecting, first visited Ecuador in 2016. A subsidiary of Hancock Prospecting, Minera Ecuadorian Exploitation and Mining (HEEM) SA, opened offices in the country in July 2017. Initially Hancock was interested in a mining concession to the west of the capital Quito, in the Pacto region, but instead parked themselves in four concessions covering several thousand hectares in the Province of Imbabura in the north of the country. These concessions were a few kilometres south from one of the largest recent finds of copper in the world - the Casabel concession owned by Solgold (with BHP and Newcrest Mining owning about 25%).

Unbeknownst to Gina, about one month after the Ecuadorian administration process began considering HEEM’s new concession, some road workers digging with a backhoe hit a vein of gold, now reported to be one of the most significant gold finds in Ecuador.

Within 2 hours of the gold being discovered, 700 people descended on the area, which lay almost in the middle of one of Gina’s concessions. Within a month an estimated 12,000 people had arrived and a new mining area known as El Triunfo was established. This was the biggest gold rush to occur in Ecuador in 25 years. Since the initial influx of people, about 3,000 people have settled in this previously sparsely-populated area.

As a response, the Ecuadorian government created a council headed by the Ecuadorian Minister with the proposed union miners was also attempting to organise workers.

Troops

In December, the body of a Colombian mine worker was found dumped in a mine shaft and the Ecuadorian Government sent 200 troops into the area to deal with the illegal mining problem. Arrests continued over January and February 2019, with recent reports suggesting that profits of up to $500,000 per month are generated illegally from the mining at El Triunfo.

The reports also suggest that organised crime and former FARC members from Colombia are involved. Minerals from El Triunfo are apparently being transported 800 km to the Southern Province of El Oro to be processed.

The military involvement in December failed to bring the area under control, because the miners are well armed and control a large amount of territory. Reports published in the Australian press in February also suggest that HEEM contracted the military and the police to evict the illegal miners as recently as December, with no success.

Problems associated with exploration and mining for gold, copper and other minerals are not new. However, copper appears now to be the new mineral that corporations are using to greenwash their new mining operations.

Notorious miner BHP has recently been running advertisements claiming that the demand for copper is helping to save the planet, because it will be used primarily for electric cars. However, the majority of copper is used in buildings and power infrastructure. Electric cars will only contribute about 2% of global copper demand. The new push to mine copper will continue to have profound impacts on local communities and the environment where the supposed minerals for new green technology are sourced.

For more information on Australian companies operating in Ecuador: Melbourne Rainforest Action Group: https://rainforestactiongroup.org/

ICE claimed that only they were in consultation with HEEM, suggesting that HEEM was not happy with the proposed union. Rinehart was also attempting to organise workers.

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Leading gene editing experts call for a moratorium on its use in humans

Louise Sales

The Australian government is once again asking states and territories to sign off on proposed changes that would allow scientists to use new genetic modification techniques such as CRISPR in animals, plants and microbes with no regulation. Some of the world’s leading experts in gene editing, have called for a global moratorium on the use of these techniques in humans because we don’t know if they are safe. In an open letter in the journal Nature, the scientists stated that “the risk of failing to make the desired change or of introducing unintended mutations (off-target effects) is still unacceptably high.”

This statement directly contradicts claims by our Gene Technology Regulator that a number of these techniques only result in small, precise changes to the genome and are therefore safe. These techniques are clearly not as precise and safe as industry scientists are claiming. It is vital that GM animals, plants and microbes produced using these techniques are assessed for safety before being released into our environment and our food chain.

In July 2018, the European Union’s top court ruled that gene editing techniques such as CRISPR pose similar risks to older GM techniques and need to be assessed for safety in the same way. Our key agricultural competitor New Zealand will also be regulating these techniques as GM.

In shockingly contrast to overseas regulators, the OGR has recommended that a number of these new GM techniques be deregulated. Furthermore, the agency has relied on advice from scientists from institutions with clear commercial conflicts of interest (including partnerships with Monsanto) in making its recommendations.

These techniques are quite clearly genetic engineering - the fact that the OGR is even considering not regulating them demonstrates how captured its has become by biotechnology industry interests.

Take action!

Contact the federal minister Bridget McKenzie and the Shadow Minister Tony Zappia and demand that they ensure that all GMOs are assessed for safety before being released into our environment and our food chain.

Minister Bridget McKenzie
Phone: (02) 6677 7495
Email: Minister.McKenzie@health.gov.au

Tony Zappia MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health
Phone: (08) 8265 3100
Tony.Zappia.MP@aph.gov.au

replacing genetic variants with alternative ones is fraught with challenges, because variants that decrease the risk of some diseases often increase the risk of others.”

Allowing the unregulated use of a number of these new GM techniques in animals amounts to a giant uncontrolled and unethical experiment with sentient, feeling creatures. It also poses major potential risks to our environment and food supply.

Meanwhile, an accumulating body of peer-reviewed scientific evidence is making the claims of the Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGR) that these techniques only result in small, precise changes to the genome increasingly untenable.

Two new studies in the journal Science looking at mice and rice show that gene editing techniques can result in “substantial genome-wide off-target mutations.”

Another new study found that the gene editing technique CRISPR caused unexpected mutations that adversely affected the immune system of mice.

These techniques are clearly not as precise and safe as industry scientists are claiming. It is vital that GM animals, plants and microbes produced using these techniques are assessed for safety before being released into our environment and our food chain.

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Email: Minister.McKenzie@health.gov.au

Tony Zappia MP
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health
Phone: (08) 8265 3100
Tony.Zappia.MP@aph.gov.au

Adani’s new law firm put forward ‘trained attack dog’ strategy for waging legal ‘war’

Josh Robertson / ABC

Lawyers for mining firm Adani proposed waging “war” on opponents of its controversial Queensland mine by using the legal system to pressure government, silence critics and financially cripple activists, according to documents obtained by the ABC.

The draft copy of Adani’s new law firm’s aggressive strategy to bring the Carmichael mine to life is labelled ‘Taking the Gloves Off’ and outlines a commercial proposal by AJ & Co to win a multi-million-dollar legal battle against the Indian mining giant. In the document, the Brisbane firm promised to be Adani’s “trained attack dog”.

The strategy recommended bankrupting individuals who unsuccessfully challenge Adani in court, using lawsuits to pressure the Queensland Government and social media “bias” as a tool to discredit opponents.

In a section called “The Man”, it recommended “where activists and commentators spread untruths, use the legal system to silence them”. It also urged Adani to hire private investigators to target activists and work “with police and a criminal lawyer to ensure appropriate police action is taken against protesters”.

“Like a well-trained police dog, our litigations know when to sit and shake; and when it is time to bite,” the law firm promised. The AJ & Co plan pledged to “assess each battle as part of the overall war” and to “know when to negotiate and known when all out attack is required”.

An Adani spokesman said “we won’t apologise for pursuing our legal rights.”

“Like many organisations, we have a panel of law firms that serve our business on a wide range of matters to ensure we are complying with Australia’s legal and regulatory frameworks,” the Adani spokesman said.

The ABC can reveal AJ & Co’s former head of commercial litigation, Alex Moriarty, quit after an internal falling out over strategy in the wake of a suspicious death. Mr Moriarty did not leak the planning document and now runs his own independent legal firm.

“Corporate lawyers who describe themselves as their client’s ‘trained attack dogs’ and to use overtly aggressive terms like ‘taking the gloves off’ and ‘playing the man’... can only harm their client’s reputation.”

Mr Moriarty told the ABC, “Such comments tend to damage the professional independence and integrity of the legal profession as a whole.”

Since it was engaged by Adani, AJ & Co has pushed to bankrupt a cash-strapped Indigenous opponent of the mine, threatened legal action against a community legal service and an environmental group, and applied to access an ABC journalist’s expenses and documents.

Murray Johnson from the anti-Adani faction of the mine site’s traditional owners, the Wangan and Jagalingou (W&J), told the ABC that in recent months ‘Adani’s strategy has definitely changed – it’s become more aggressive’. On Adani’s behalf in December, AJ & Co launched bankruptcy proceedings against vocal W&J opponent Adrian Burragubba over unpaid legal costs.

‘My uncle Adrian has been public enemy number one for Adani,’ Ms Johnson said. “For months they have been their trial all along - to essentially stamp out our resistance to the coal mine going ahead on our country.”

A day after the ABC revealed Adani was under investigation for alleged unlawful site works, AJ & Co wrote to Queensland’s Environmental Defenders Office (EDO), EDO chief executive Jo Bragg, who commented in the ABC story, said the letter was ‘clearly designed to intimidate us’, although she declined to elaborate. ‘It appears Adani has built an entire, well-funded strategy around hiring lawyers to bully community groups into silence,’ she said. AJ & Co later applied under federal Freedom of Information laws to access ABC journalist Mark Wilcay’s expenses and documents relating to the story.

In November, AJ & Co demanded environmental campaigners Market Forces [an affiliate of Friends of the Earth Australia] abandon a trip to South Korea with W&J opponents to lobby banks not to invest in Adani. Market Forces executive director Julian Vincent said the law firm accused the campaigners of injurious falsehood, unlawful conspiracy to cause economic loss to Adani and threatened legal action.

‘It was pretty aggressive,’ Mr Vincent said. ‘It came across with a tone that had little substance to back up the allegations it made, and was quite threatening in the steps that would be taken if we didn’t comply with everything they wanted.’

A barrister for Market Forces told AJ & Co its allegations were ‘doomed to fail’ and no more was heard from the firm.


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Chain Reaction #135

Chain Reaction #135
Aboriginal voices are missing from the Murray-Darling Basin crisis

Bradley J. Moggridge and Ross M. Thompson

The Murray-Darling crisis has led to drinking water shortages, drying rivers, and fish kills in the Darling, Macintyre and Murrumbidgee Rivers. This has been the catalyst for recommendations for a Royal Commission and creation of two independent scientific expert panels. The federal Labor party has sought advice from an independent panel through the Australian Academy of Science, while the Coalition government has asked former Bureau of Meteorology chief Rob Vertessy to convene a second panel. Crucially, the first panel contains no Indigenous representatives, and there is little indication that the second panel will either.

Indigenous meaning

Water for Aboriginal peoples is an important part of survival and growth, and has always been central to life on Earth. Protecting water is both a cultural obligation and a necessary practice in the sustainability of everyday life. The Aboriginal peoples’ worldview sees water as inseparably connected to the land and sky, bound by traditional lore and customs in a system of sustainable management that ensures healthy water for future generations. Without ongoing connection between these aspects, there is no culture or survival. For a people in a dry landscape, traditional knowledge of finding, re-finding and protecting water sites is integral to survival. Today this knowledge may well serve a broader vision of sustainability for all Australia.

While different Aboriginal Nations describe their Indigenous meaning for water differently, they generally identify water as the lifeblood of the community, the source of food, health, and connection with country. Without water, life is unsustainable. The NSW Aboriginal Water Initiative, tasked with re-engaging NSW Aboriginal people in water management and planning, ran from 2012 until the Department of Industry water disbanded the unit in early 2017. In a 2018 progress report, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority described NSW as “well behind” on water sharing plans. Even after a damning ABC Four Corners report shed light on alleged water theft and mismanagement, the voices of the Aboriginal people of the Murray-Darling Basin were absent.

In May 2018, the federal Labor party agreed to a federal government policy package of amendments to the Basin Plan, including a cut of 70 billion litres to the water recovery target in the northern basin, and further bipartisan agreement for better water outcomes for Indigenous people of the basin. While the measures also included A$40 million for Aboriginal communities to invest in water entitlements, a A$20 million economic development fund to benefit Aboriginal groups most affected by the basin plan, and A$1.5 million to support Aboriginal waterway assessments, how worthwhile are these measures later?

Murray Darling mess

Governments of all political stripes are almost always absent from the discussion of water in Australia. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Ross M. Thompson is Chair of Water Science and Director, University of Canberra. Bradley J. Moggridge works on Indigenous Water Research at the University of Canberra and receives funding from the Murray Darling Basin Authority. Ross M. Thompson is Chair of Water Science and Director, University of Canberra. Reprinted (without references) from The Conversation, 31 Jan 2019, https://theconversation.com/aboriginal-voices-are-missing-from-the-murray-darling-basin-crisis-110769

Policy and politicians are failing our environment and our future

Elkony Bennett

January 12, 2019 – You probably had a lovely shower this morning before you sat down to read the paper. Imagine, if you turned on the tap, the water that came out stank. That’s life for people in Menindee and surrounding areas right now. Politicians from every state and federal parliament should be at Menindee to experience the stench for themselves. I was once living in the area, and though I never actually felt the problem, I was aware of its existence. The Murray Darling Basin is a river with no water. The Basin plan has not yet reached its first goal. The fury and distress of farmers, the Murray cod, was palpable and it is a fury every Australian should share.

Federal and state governments have used taxpayers’ money to effectively make the problem worse. In the few weeks the federal Coalition government will use taxpayers’ money to make another environmental and economic policy mistake that will burden future generations.тье rubbish or building a new gas or coal-fired power station. Fortunately, it’s not too late to stop that disaster – but more on that later.

Murray Darling Basin

Governments of all political stripes are almost always absent from the discussion of water in Australia. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Ross M. Thompson is Chair of Water Science and Director, University of Canberra. Bradley J. Moggridge works on Indigenous Water Research at the University of Canberra and receives funding from the Murray Darling Basin Authority. Ross M. Thompson is Chair of Water Science and Director, University of Canberra. Reprinted (without references) from The Conversation, 31 Jan 2019, https://theconversation.com/aboriginal-voices-are-missing-from-the-murray-darling-basin-crisis-110769

Australians are in a land of droughts and flooding rains, but this is a man-made ecological disaster. Draining the Menindee lakes twice in four years has proven to be an environmental catastrophe and it was a deliberate decision that must now be explained.

The only flood the Murray Darling has seen lately is the flood of media reports unleashed after ABC Four Corners blew the lid on allegations of water theft – since then stories of agency cover ups, political and regulatory capture with cultures of non-compliance, dodgy water deals, alleged fraud and unlawful amendments have been flowing non-stop.

Underwriting new coal-fired power a disaster for taxpayers

Now the Morrison government is rushing ahead with a half-baked plan to use taxpayers’ money to underwrite new dirty gas or coal-fired power stations, or refurbish old ones. Unless we stop it, this will be a disaster economically and environmentally, even the Australia Industry Group (AIG) warned this plan could leave taxpayers exposed to liabilities “with a net present value of billions of dollars”. For the first time in the history of Australia’s electricity grid, coal fired power is not the cheapest form of new power generation. You’d think that would be good news to Australia’s minister for reducing electricity prices Angus Taylor, but he is determined to waste taxpayers’ money on a project no-one in the private sector will back with their own money. The Energy Minister plans to handpick energy corporations to back. We don’t know how he will pick the lucky energy company given the program has not been finalised. We don’t know under what authority he will provide the support (and there are questions around whether he will need legislation as well) because the government has not provided much detail at all.

What we do know is that Minister Taylor has ignored the ACCC recommendation that would bar any party that already holds more than 10% of a single market – allowing the big energy companies – the same ones accused by the Minister of pushing up electricity prices using their market power – to also take advantage of this new government subsidy instead of guaranteeing more competition.

It is not the only ACCC recommendation Minister Taylor has ignored. Government funding will begin from the first year of operation, without any demonstration that customers have been lined up to purchase the power. Last week Seven News reported the government has received “up to 40” expressions of interest for public support for new power generation, including some for new gas and coal power plants. Minister Taylor will rush to finalise the request for proposals in the first quarter of 2019, before the last day and the impending election.

This process stinks like the fish rotting in the Darling. Bypassing good process and due diligence is becoming a hallmark of this government (the Senate is still looking into the dodgy deal with the Great Barrier Reef foundation) and in a rush to lock in new gas and coal power generation that will pollute our air for up to 50 years, instead of taking the policy to the election a few months away, is just irresponsible – it is vindictive. Our government isn’t tackling global warming, it’s throwing coal on the fire and using taxpayer’s money to do it. If Angus Taylor proceeds with this plan, he is fleeing from future generations, leaving them a toxic environmental and economic burden he won’t have to deal with.

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Chain Reaction #135

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elections can’t come soon enough for people or refused approval. Of those, just 21 projects (0.4%) were rejected projects were referred to the Minister under the ribbon environmental legislation. The Australia the current Coalition government, have treated For years, successive governments, including the current Coalition government, have treated Australia’s clean water, clean air, fertile soil and oceans as an acceptable casualty to virtually every and any major development project that has been proposed. Australia’s EPIC Act is supposed to be our blue-ribbon environmental legislation. The Australia Institute published research which showed that between the commencement of the EPIC Act in July 2000 and August 2015, approximately 5900 projects were referred to the Minister under the environmental impact assessment provisions. Of those, just 21 projects (0.4%) were rejected or refused approval.

The number of times the federal government has protected the environment over a development proposal is effectively a rounding error. A strong corruption watchdog with teeth can’t come soon enough. I bet the NSW and federal elections can’t come soon enough for people in Menindee either.

Ebony Bennett is deputy director of The Australia Institute.

The major parties really don’t care that much about the environment

Despite unequivocal evidence of ecosystems collapsing around the world, the major political parties in Australia (and other countries) seem largely not to care. They remain fixated on the economy above all else, with their public legitimacy resting on winning the debate around deficits, jobs and border security. But to effectively govern they also need to fix the problems affecting society. So why do they habitually fail to address the biggest threats imaginable? The major parties in Australia are products of the 20th century, wedded to unlimited industrial development, and unwilling or unable to consider any alternatives. The parties largely agree on permanent economic growth, and compete over narrow issues, such as who should benefit most from expanding production and consumption. Electoral and parliamentary politics is often contested over where to distribute revenue and services - between the wealthy and the remainder of the population. The environment is unfortunately just a minor issue, an unwelcome distraction from the main event. Labor claims to represent the working classes. Their core constituency remains the (shrinking) unionised workforce and segmented socio-economic groups often located in outer metropolitan areas. They campaign on securing and protecting rights for workers, through higher wages and improved workplace conditions. Labor’s election victory under Rudd in 2007 is often attributed to the union campaign against the Coalition Government’s infamous WorkChoices laws. Labor also claims the moral ground as the redistributors of wealth generated through taxation, often to public welfare, health and education services. But since the 1980s Labor governments have eagerly embraced neo-liberalism and deregulated the market economy. Those leading the party actively court the industrial masters, hoping for short-term electoral rewards. For Labor, the traditional base of blue-collar workers is not enough to win government. They need to attract a plurality of voters, often targeting more progressive and educated sectors, as well as ethnic or social groups. The environment is one area that Labor uses to attract these votes, and to differentiate their candidates. Each election the party announces a few notable environmental policies, such as stronger conservation laws or mechanisms to reduce carbon emissions. But these election commitments are often pragmatic, rather than a deep commitment to the environment. As a strategy it’s purely about the ballot and securing a strong and permanent electoral vote like the Greens. This tactic is often critical to winning marginal seats and forming government.

For the Liberal and National parties, the highest priority is to secure benefits for the private sector. Their main focus is freeing up markets to improve capital accumulation and new enterprise investment. Suppressing wage growth, stripping employee conditions, lowering taxes, and removing government regulation is what they breathe. Government spending should support business and economic growth, via infrastructure and even as direct subsidies. The core constituents of the Liberal and National parties are businesses, large and small. These parties also attract a large percentage of the conservative vote from rural areas, and moral or religious voters. They are not particularly interested in attracting environmental voters, and these do not currently constitute a large vote share.

Many coalition parliamentarians work assiduously to remove basic environmental regulations, while advocating for increased government subsidies for known polluting industries such as coal. For example, the short-lived Newman-LNP administration sent environmental policy back decades. In three years the LNP stripped land-clearing laws, and completely removed legislation protecting wild rivers and a mandatory levy on waste. Queensland now has some of highest land-clearing rates in the world, and has become a dumping ground for other states rubbish. When in government, neither of the major parties accords a high priority for environmental issues, unless it’s politically expedient to do so. Environment ministries are at the bottom of the hierarchy, a junior ministry assigned to a novice or underperforming MP. Most parliamentarians view the environment portfolio as a step on a career path to something more illustrious such as education, health or defence. This is despite the fact that the voting public continues to rate environment issues in the top 5 or so each election cycle. Environment agencies remain one of the most poorly funded across government, with budgets often inadequate to cover basic regulatory needs. Biodiversity programs are almost entirely unfunded, and the first step to cut when the treasury is short of revenue. Protecting biodiversity and reducing environmental impacts is always secondary to spending on infrastructure and defence. If the major parties truly considered that the biosphere is on the brink of collapse - which most scientists insist it is - then the environment should be accorded the highest priority, over and above managing economic output. Mitigating the rapidly unfolding climate and biodiversity crises would top all other election issues, and become the epicenter of government effort. Environment ministries should set the largest budget allocations, direct policy across all other ministries, and instill the welfare of the natural environment as the basis of all major decision making. As a start they would permanently suspend all proposed coalmines and gas fields too.

But the major parties are absent, largely focused on securing government and then keeping various constituents satisfied. These parties are beholden to industrial, corporate and union interests that directly influence the policy cycle at all levels. These interests expend considerable resources on sophisticated lobbying and marketing efforts to block, weaken and remove environmental legislation they deem affects their profits. Many who work in industry organisations, corporations, unions occupy parliamentary positions, as advisors to ministers, or gain pre-selection in favoured seats. Likewise, many ministers and party leaders on leaving parliament are recruited as lobbyists for large business organisations. Others, known as the revolving door, undermines our democracy and disempowers the community. Further, the preferential electoral system used nationally and in most states and territories maintains the duopoly of the major parties, to the benefit of these core constituents and allied donors.

We are not just losing a few iconic species, entire habitats and life support systems are being decimated by the onslaught of industrial society like the Greens. This tactic is often critical to winning marginal seats and forming government. For the Liberal and National parties, the highest priority is to secure benefits for the private sector. Their main focus is freeing up markets to improve capital accumulation and new enterprise investment. Suppressing wage growth, stripping employee conditions, lowering taxes, and removing government regulation is what they breathe. Government spending should support business and economic growth, via infrastructure and even as direct subsidies. The core constituents of the Liberal and National parties are businesses, large and small. These parties also attract a large percentage of the conservative vote from rural areas, and moral or religious voters. They are not particularly interested in attracting environmental voters, and these do not currently constitute a large vote share.
Why waste-carbon injection is a dangerous distraction from climate action

Catherine Hearse, Ziana Fuad and Kate Watshow

Golden Beach is an idyllic section of Ninety Mile Beach in Victoria. It boasts a pristine coastline, where whales can be seen from the sand in migrating season. The beaches have plentiful fish, native birds and the skeletal remains of an 1897 shipwreck.

But there is a cloud hanging over this lovely place. A publicly funded state government project, called CarbonNet, has earmarked the area for waste-carbon injection.

Waste-carbon injection and storage is the process of mixing waste-carbon with a range of chemicals in order to inject it into the ground. Waste-carbon can come from different sources, including gas or coal power stations. The fossil fuel industry uses the term ‘carbon capture and storage’. However, this is a misnomer. The term ‘waste-carbon injection’ is more appropriate.

Waste-carbon injection site just 7 km off the coast from Golden Beach, where they would inject carbon waste into the seabed.

The source of the waste-carbon is a proposed coal-to-hydrogen project in the Latrobe Valley that is being pushed by the Japanese company Kawasaki Heavy Industries. In a bid to decarbonise, Japan is looking to source hydrogen to fuel its vehicles, and the brown coal in the Latrobe Valley is being eyed as a potential source. However the project will only go ahead if it can be claimed to be ‘low-carbon’, which is where CarbonNet’s project fits in.

Community members in Golden Beach have been fighting the project, and a group called ‘Ninety Mile Against Carbon Capture’ has emerged. They do not want this project built because of the potential health and environmental risks it poses to their community.

The problems with waste-carbon injection

Ineffective technology: There are well-founded and grave concerns about waste-carbon injection. Despite billions of dollars being spent in projects worldwide the possibility of dangerous leakage remains, rendering the exercise futile. According to a study by the University of Copenhagen, unless leakage can be kept below 1% over 1,000 years, waste-carbon injection will not stop climate change.

A prime example of the unreliability of this technology is US company Chevron’s Gorgon project. In Western Australia, Chevron’s carbon-waste storage facility has recently been delayed for the second time because of continuing technical issues. It was supposed to be up and running in 2017 at the beginning of the Gorgon gas project in order to sequester emissions. The gas project itself was approved on the condition that it was partnered with waste-carbon injection, so that Australia would still be able to achieve its Paris Agreement targets.

However the injection and storage process failed from the start, and an estimated 6.2 million tonnes of pollution that were supposed to be safely stored have already been emitted. The second delay is expected to result in up to another 11 million tonnes of emissions.

Advocates of carbon-waste injection and storage technology say the technology is ready to be rolled out, yet existing facilities still do not work.

Toxic chemicals: How the chemicals being used to try to trap carbon may react and degrade when injected into the seafloor is unknown. These chemicals include a range of amines including carcinogenic nitrosamines.

We don’t yet know how the leaking of these compounds into the marine environment will affect marine life and ecosystems. The results could be toxic and devastating.

Furthermore, this area on the Gippsland coastline is seismically active, and close to important underground aquifers. The safety of communities and the environment, as well as the integrity of these aquifers, is far from guaranteed.

Extremely costly: As the Australia Institute noted in its 2017 report ‘Money for Nothing’, Australia has spent a staggering $1.5 billion on waste-carbon injection technology.

Most projects fail to successfully store any carbon at all. Some never even reach the stage where the process can be attempted. Truckloads of money on an experimental technology that’s not yet proven to work anywhere. The Victorian government must stop funding waste-carbon injection research with public money and reallocate any remaining funds towards job creation in the Latrobe Valley.

Continued misplaced faith in waste-carbon technology delays a commitment to transitioning away from fossil fuels, which is what Victoria and the world must do if we are to maintain a safe climate. Money that is being funnelled into this failed technology could be going to growing renewable energy and battery storage, developing renewable industries and jobs, and funding a just transition from coal for the Latrobe Valley community.

Not a climate solution: Advocates of the CarbonNet waste-carbon injection project peddle it as a solution to climate change in Victoria. However this is problematic and misleading for multiple reasons.

As outlined earlier, waste-carbon injection is not a reliable process. So there is the risk that if this project went ahead it would experience the same technological delays dogging Chevron’s Gorgon project, and emissions would continue to be pumped into the atmosphere.

Furthermore, CarbonNet is attached to an entirely new coal project. So even if it was a reliable project that would store emissions, it would not reduce the climate impact of any of Victoria’s current emissions.

Solar and wind energy are both currently cheaper than waste-carbon injection and continuously decreasing in price. They also have the benefit of working! Renewables are reliable, and unlike waste-carbon injection, are already reducing our carbon output.

The funding wasted on waste-carbon technologies would be better spent on improving and rolling out proven renewable technology, but there is a dangerous, misplaced hope keeping old coal alive in an increasingly warming climate.

As engineering researchers noted in an article in The Conversation: “Keeping the coal in the ground is not only the most economical way of reducing carbon emissions, it is a sure way to save thousands of lives every day due to cleaner air. It is a classic case of ‘prevention,’ through decarbonization of energy systems, being better and cheaper than the ‘cure’ of CO2 capture.”

What are we doing?

Friends of the Earth Melbourne and the Quit Coal collective are standing against Ninety Mile Against Carbon Capture to oppose CarbonNet’s waste-carbon injection project. We are calling on Premier Daniel Andrews to do the right thing by the Golden Beach community, and by all Victorians, and block this expensive and unreliable project.

To learn more and get involved you can check out the Quit Coal website, or attend a collective meeting at 6pm Wednesdays, at Friends of the Earth Melbourne. www.quitcoal.org.au
Hinchinbrook Island

Ingrid Marker

Queensland state tourism minister Kate Jones has announced plans to develop Hinchinbrook Island, Great Sandy Strait and Coolum National Park for business. Hinchinbrook is precious to north Queenslanders. Its wild beaches and crooked creek crossings are a coming of age for wilderness bushwalkers up here. It's the land of the Girramay people.

On offer is a business partnership with leaseholds of 60 years. Jones is offering public money to develop infrastructure within the public park for developers' private profit. She proposes exclusive and expensive glamping cabins along the track with associated infrastructure placed in this natural environment. The heavy footprint of man is coming.

If ever there was a time to let things be, now is the time. Species extinction crisis, threatened and endangered animals vanishing and habitat destruction signal a rapid future. National Parks and World Heritage protections were put in place in order to safeguard and protect biological diversity.

In the lead up, key proponent Brett Goffrey was appointed by Minister Jones to be chair of Tourism and Events Queensland. It is his private business, the Australian Walking Company, which is one of three applicants in the expressions-of-interest process. Goffrey is in a valuable revolving door. The state government will build the infrastructure and give the successful applicant the public asset for personal profit. Exclusive glamping cabins will be offered to the rich. Subleasing will be allowed but no bond has been discussed for damages which might occur.

Three islands are to be developed for private leasehold. One of them is Hinchinbrook, a World Heritage listed biological haven which is listed as the second most irreplaceable ecosystem on the planet out of 170 top World Heritage sites. The Thorsborne Trail is iconic, globally ranked as one of the 10 best wilderness walks in the world, unique and rare.

National Park management should not be creating excludability so only the top end of town can afford to be with Nature and enjoy the National Parks experience. Parks belong to everyone.

Parks belong to everyone. National Park management should not be creating exclusivity so only the top end of town can afford to be with Nature and enjoy the National Parks experience. Parks belong to everyone.

The island management plan is capped at 40 people at once to minimise environmental impacts and create a remote experience. With cabins booked, the general public will be locked out.

History has shown many of these type of developments on islands or along the coast are in ruins. They have never supported regional communities. National Parks have always had a policy of locating private development outside the National Parks: adjoining or near the Park. Whenever the privatisation of commercial activity is allowed within the National Parks, even if ecotourism, their profitability will become the management driver rather than the principle of conserving the environment.

No-one is opposed to appropriate ecotourism, but it must not interfere with biodiversity and other management principles.

National parks belong to "the people", a public good. It is a fundamental government responsibility to take good care of the public good, out of the public purse. Government is the guardian of our national treasure; it should not be, as poet Judith Wright wrote, "You cannot keep cutting steaks off a bullOCK and expect it to stay alive." An area placed under protection for its natural values should attract certainty of protection, particularly when Queensland Parks contribute $4.5 billion in tourism dollars every year. Tourism in Parks collects 28% of the money brought into Queensland on less than 7% of land. To say Parks are not contributing to the economy is laughable. Most of the tourism employment is in associated services based outside the Park.

From a sudden announcement, the collective wisdom of regional communities has been ignored. Potential development should be created outside the park and geared to support economic development of a local community. This would require integrated efforts by the government to build relationships, consult with and invest in the community.

To date a sham community consultation process was conducted after public outrage. Due process has failed. The minister's department facilitated a half-day of consultation, 20-minute individual meetings, only giving the community two days' notice of meeting. This is clearly a failure of public servants operating in democracy. They have succumbed apparently to pressure from sneaky capital.

The cardinal principle of National Parks is for 'the permanent preservation of the area's natural condition and the protection of the area's cultural resources and values', not creating a recreational playground and diminishing biodiversity.

Please write or call tourism minister Kate Jones to register your opposition, and ask environment minister Leeanne Enoch why she is failing to protect the cardinal principle. Enough is Enough. Public Parks not Private Playgrounds.

We are seeking people from anywhere in Australia (but particularly in Queensland) who are interested in helping to build grassroots activity to protect National Parks from inappropriate development.

Contact: cassowarykeystoneconservation@gmail.com

Electric cars are OK,
but public transport is better

Rachel Lynsky

Electric vehicles (EVs) are not the silver bullet transcendent for our transport industry, but the momentum for change is building, and EVs might be part of the change.

By simply championing a technical switch to EVs we will miss the greater opportunity of this problem. Focusing too strongly on EVs will lock in existing problems around congestion, health and the liveability of our cities.

We will fail to tackle our commitments in the Paris climate agreement if we don't start reducing our transport emissions. Some of these emissions could be reduced by shifting to clean EVs - if plugged into renewable energy for charging.

However, public transport already has a fraction of the emissions per capita of car transport. Our electricity grid remains dependent on dirty fossil fuels. In parts of Australia, plugging into the grid means using more dirty energy than you'd be saving with your EV.

Single vehicles on our road network move people around inefficiently, causing the increasing congestion in our growing cities. The amount of space they take up vastly outweighs the number of people they move.

They also consume precious land when not in use by having space allocated to car parking lots, on-street parking, and space at our homes to leave idle vehicles.

The car industry meets at the Paris Motor Show this week, facing hazards ranging from the robustness of costly electric vehicles and tightening emissions rules to potential trade restrictions.

Providing this space for vehicles is a driving factor in the rapid urban sprawl we are witnessing. Farms and native habitat particularly around Melbourne and, to a lesser extent, Sydney are being encroached on by low density sprawl, which relies on roads for cars and land to store them at our homes or destinations. With limited public transport in many new suburbs, many families are forced to bear the cost of two or more cars to be able to get to work, school and the shops. Simply shifting these vehicles to EVs reinforces the problems of sprawl.

Beyond the question of electric cars is the emerging issue of driverless (autonomous) vehicles. Will they tackle congestion if we end up with empty idle individually-owned vehicles on the roads? If not individually-owned, who will own them and how will they improve everyone's lives?

What role does private industry play in this? Australia's largest tolling company, Transurban, already has the data for major roads (owning 15 of 19 Australian toll roads), so what happens if they own the data to tell us cars where to go? How will their motivation to make more shareholder profit impact the mobility of the city? Transurban and the car industry are already leading the charge to test electric and autonomous vehicles.

We need to ensure people are put first to limit unnecessary human costs. And we need to fight against private interests prioritising profits over people.

Many low-income people rely on their cars to get to school or work. While we need to transition our car and truck fleet to electric engines, there are very real social justice concerns that will need to be addressed as this transition occurs. EVs remain an expensive relative to cars that rely on petrol or diesel.

Higher income households are more likely to be in a position to afford new cars with low emissions, including electric vehicles. They will disproportionately benefit from EV uptake: financial incentives (as in rebates), priority access to bus lanes, and priority parking for EVs.

Lower income households that can only afford used cars would miss out, perpetuating inequality.

Our governments must listen to urban planners and designers so that urban development is delivered with adequate infrastructure for people to imagine a city that is less car dependent.

Internationally there are strong moves to eliminate polluting cars and encourage electric vehicles. If Australia doesn't develop its own standards, we risk being left as a dumbed down ground for outdated polluting diesel and petrol vehicles.

In Australia, only relying on electric vehicles, we can create healthier, fairer and more connected cities. It's time to focus investment on more public transport to improve connections and frequency.

Then people can just turn up to public transport routes and go, getting to their destinations quickly and reliably. More people travelling by foot, bike and public transport create safer streets and a stronger sense of community.

We know not everyone has the choice to leave their cars behind. Our emergency services, some of our delivery trucks and tradies, and those with accessibility issues will continue to need to move on road based transport. But we need to leave our roads free for those that need them to do their work without getting caught in unnecessary traffic.

Switching to electric vehicles addresses just one part of the problem that our car-centric city faces: rising pollution. We already have more efficient public transport systems.

Urban sprawl and the divisions cars produce in our city will only continue to do their work without getting caught in unnecessary traffic.

Providing this space for vehicles is a driving factor in the rapid urban sprawl we are witnessing. Farms and native habitat particularly around Melbourne and, to a lesser extent, Sydney are being encroached on by low density sprawl, which relies on roads for cars and land to store them at our homes or destinations. With limited public transport in many new suburbs, many families are forced to bear the cost of two or more cars to be able to get to work, school and the shops. Simply shifting these vehicles to EVs reinforces the problems of sprawl.

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Rachel Lynsky is the community campaigner for Friends of the Earth's Sustainable Cities campaign.

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seven decades years ago as the site for the development of the RAAF’s Canberra Bomber. Over the current event around 200,000 people are expected to join air force representatives from Australia, France, Japan, Singapore, the UK, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. Defence personnel can access complimentary tickets, but are requested to wear their military uniform, no doubt to add to the smash-buckling glamour. Behind the Orwellian images exhorting civilian families to bring their loved ones to the new Colosseum is a disturbing trend towards uncontested war planning, spending and legitimacy. Recently the Coalition announced plans to position Australia as one of the world’s top 10 arms exporters. Only if there are union jobs with an approved super fund, said a resolute Labor Party. And in the last week we have seen revelations of close links between publicly-funded Australian arms manufacturers and the provision of weapons to Saudi Arabia, which is currently driving the war in Yemen. The sponsors of the Avalon event include the federal and state governments along with a who’s who of arms corporations. BAE and Raytheon are giving away show bags alongside nuclear weapons heavyweight Lockheed Martin. General Atomics, a shadowy group that has a finger in poisoned pies from drones to uranium mining in South Australia is involved while Northrop Grumman, who’s cyber division is able to ‘project force’ globally, is just one more of the cash-splashers. And these corporations have cash to splash. In 2015 the leading US arms corporations generated over US$200 billion. An analysis by the Institute for Strategic Studies shows that with an annual spend of around $600 billion, 40% of the entire globe’s annual military outlay. And with President Trump pushing a massive military budget increase, trumpeting ‘peace through strength’ and unilaterally shredding nuclear weapons constraints, these are good times for the MBA heavy masters of war. But it is unlikely that these figures – or their opportunity costs or who makes these decisions and on what basis – will be taking to the air this week. Parade the hardware and avoid the hard questions – since the days of the airplane and circus in Rome some public relations strategies remain fundamentally unaltered. But there are real issues that need to be ventilated along with the Jet fuel and Av-gas. What is the role of state and federal government subsidy for the defense sector? Should Australian academic institutions be entering into commercial-in-confidence research arrangements with multinational weapons, including nuclear weapons, corporations? Why is Australian defense spending growing and who are we protecting – and from what threat – with our $20 billion plus annual spend? Oh, and one more. How can the event organiser – Aerospace Australia Ltd – be a registered charity? Charity might begin at home but with this sector it directly leads to shatterered lives abroad. Alongside the warplanes, it’s time for some plain truths and high-octane answers. Calling out those who created a有毒 environment for Muslims

## War, what is it good for … besides blood lust and the Avalon Airshow?

Dave Sweeney

February 26 – Australians are generally lucky where it comes to the air – we have big skies and safe planes that routinely take off and land and relocate us for holidays, family reunions and commerce. Our airborne images are red kangaaroos, flying doctors and grizzly newswreels of early aviators breaking new records in old planes. It is a world away from many other places experience of the sky as a hostile space that threatens rapid and remote destruction and death. For most of us the closest we get to this at all too common global reality is TV news footage of wailing sirens and survivors amid the rubble. But such vision is unlikely to be on the big screen at Avalon airport this week. Avalon enthusiastically positions itself as Melbourne’s ‘other’ airport. Instead it is a place where not a lot happens. Every day there are roughly equal numbers of Jestor services and bewildered backpackers wondering how far they are from the MCG (about 60kms). But every second year the wind-swept paddocks between the open range Zoo and the closed range prison complex hosts a truly perverse family feel-good celebration. The Avalon Airshow is comprised of two concurrent events – the Australian International Aerospace and Defence Exhibition is an industry-only trade-fest that runs for three days before merging with a major public event, the very public; Australian International Airshow for a further three days of ‘the ultimate family adventure’. If websites could get breathtaking this would need a respirator. Experience the awesome power of military aviation. A high voltage array of combat aircraft takes centre stage with the thrust and grunt of the latest heavy metal. Marvel as jet combat aircraft takes centre stage with the thrust power of military aviation. A high voltage array of three days of ‘the ultimate family adventure’. Australian International Airshow for a further two registered charities? Charity might begin at home but with this sector it directly leads to shattered lives abroad.

The next year, Channel Nine personality Sonia Kruger told her TV audience, ‘I wish people would understand that NCAT recently found encouraged “hated towards, or serious contempt for, Australian Muslims by ordinary members of the Australian population’, that she agreed with News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt that Muslim immigration should be halted because she did not feel safe. Bolt has not been alone in promoting such ideas. A 2017 study found that News Corp publications carried an average of eight negative stories about Muslims a day. Security agencies and researchers of violent extremism have also concentrated on Muslims as a threat. Defending Christensen’s right to speak at the Reclaim Australia rally then founded a campaign. Further the tragic murder last year of Sisto Malaspina in Bourke Street, Melbourne, by a Muslim known to authorities, Morrison and Dutton both said that ordinary Muslims needed to do more to prevent terrorism. Morrison accused them of looking the other way and sticking their heads in the sand. My advice to Morrison and his fellow travellers is to do less. Stop using one of the most negative media campaigns.

Dr Kate Ahmad, one of two people behind a gofundme petition for the removal of Queensland senator Fraser Anning from Parliament for his comments. After Pauline Hanson’s 2016 election, Abbott publicly met with and congratulated her. The next year, Channel Nine personality Sonia Kruger told her TV audience, ‘I wish people would understand that NCAT recently found encouraged “hated towards, or serious contempt for, Australian Muslims by ordinary members of the Australian population’, that she agreed with News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt that Muslim immigration should be halted because she did not feel safe. Bolt has not been alone in promoting such ideas. A 2017 study found that News Corp publications carried an average of eight negative stories about Muslims a day. Security agencies and researchers of violent extremism have also concentrated on Muslims as a threat. Defending Christensen’s right to speak at the Reclaim Australia rally then founded a campaign. Further the tragic murder last year of Sisto Malaspina in Bourke Street, Melbourne, by a Muslim known to authorities, Morrison and Dutton both said that ordinary Muslims needed to do more to prevent terrorism. Morrison accused them of looking the other way and sticking their heads in the sand. My advice to Morrison and his fellow travellers is to do less. Stop using one of the most negative media campaigns.

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## Calling out those who created a toxic environment for Muslims

Susie Latham

Fraser Anning deserves widespread condemnation for his comments about the massacre of 50 Muslims in Christchurch mosques. But many mainstream voices now curse him for his comments. Scott Morrison, who has stated that he will “always speak out about” comments that seek to denigrate Muslims and Islam, created a political environment toxic to Muslims. Indonesia’s Muslim family 15 years ago, so I’ve been particularly sensitive to the dog-whistling of the Coalition, some sections of the media and public figures on this issue, along with the silence (with some notable exceptions) from Labor. In 2006, Danita Vale argued against an abortion bill on the basis that it could help Australia become a Muslim nation within 50 years. Later that year, then prime minister John Howard told a talkback radio caller ‘there is a … small section of the Islamic population … which is very resistant to integration’. Ann Marie Shaddick from the Australian Islamic Network delivered the closing keynote at the 2007 Sydney Writers Festival, receiving standing ovations. Three months earlier, she had proclaimed Islam ‘a destructive, nihilistic cult of death. It legitimates murder … not just with extremist elements within Islam, but the ideology of Islam itself.’ In early 2011, Morrison encouraged his colleagues, then in opposition, to ‘capitalise on the electorate’s growing concerns about ‘Muslim immigration’, ‘Muslims in Australia’ and the ‘inability of Muslim migrants to integrate’,’. In 2014, Bronwyn Bishop ruled that Muslim women wearing the burqa in Parliament House must be segregated behind a glass enclosure. Dr Kate Ahmad, one of two people behind a gofundme petition for the removal of Queensland senator Fraser Anning from Parliament for his comments. After Pauline Hanson’s 2016 election, Abbott publicly met with and congratulated her. The next year, Channel Nine personality Sonia Kruger told her TV audience, ‘I wish people would understand that NCAT recently found encouraged “hated towards, or serious contempt for, Australian Muslims by ordinary members of the Australian population’, that she agreed with News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt that Muslim immigration should be halted because she did not feel safe. Bolt has not been alone in promoting such ideas. A 2017 study found that News Corp publications carried an average of eight negative stories about Muslims a day. Security agencies and researchers of violent extremism have also concentrated on Muslims as a threat. Defending Christensen’s right to speak at the Reclaim Australia rally then founded a campaign. Further the tragic murder last year of Sisto Malaspina in Bourke Street, Melbourne, by a Muslim known to authorities, Morrison and Dutton both said that ordinary Muslims needed to do more to prevent terrorism. Morrison accused them of looking the other way and sticking their heads in the sand. My advice to Morrison and his fellow travellers is to do less. Stop using one of the most negative media campaigns.

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Now is the time for grieving'.

March 16 – Getting your head around an unspeakable tragedy like that which occurred in Christchurch yesterday is no easy thing. It’s hard to fathom the level of hate that underpins such a heinous act.

Ordinarily when an event like this occurs, there’s a rush from political leaders to offer condolences. But there’s also a clamour to avoid political discussion. When terrible things like this happen, ‘now is not the time for debate. Nor is the time for grieving.

In Australia, on this occasion, that clamour hasn’t occurred. I think that’s in part because Muslim victims are Muslim and most Australians don’t – and won’t – balk at that. There’s no ‘profile pic filter’ in support of the Muslims of Christchurch flooding Facebook today.

I think it’s also in part because Muslim leaders themselves – vanguard and all – are already leading the calls for a national discussion, although it’s not like they haven’t been doing that for a long time. Journalist Osman Faruqi probably put it best: ‘I feel so sad. We begged you to stop amplifying and normalising hatred and racism. But you told us we were ‘politically correct’ and ‘freedom of speech’ was more important. The more you gave the far-right a platform, the more powerful they got. We begged you.’

There are several distinctly separate conversations that must go on, across two countries, and there’s a deep, twisted irony in at least one of them. If New Zealand leaders respond the way Australian leaders have in the past, then there will be a debate centred around immigration. They might come to the conclusion that no Muslim has ever come to this country before. So they put it best: ‘I feel so sad. We begged you to stop amplifying and normalising hatred and racism. But you told us we were “politically correct” and “freedom of speech” was more important. The more you gave the far-right a platform, the more powerful they got. We begged you.’

Aussie racism and our leaders

When John Howard, our Prime Minister from 1996 until 2007, first joined the Liberal Party in the 1950s, slavery of Aboriginal people was common in Australia, although there is no official recognition of this in our museums or libraries. Aboriginal children were taken from their families, placed into ‘homes’ and then forced to labour. Their wages and savings were held in ‘trust’ by government, and then stolen. As late as 1986 governments were still refusing to pay Aboriginal workers the same wages as everyone else. When a court finally ordered equal pay, the Queensland Government increased the wage level, then sacked the requisite number of black workers to ensure there was no impact on the bottom line.

As this occurred, John Howard had already been in parliament a decade and a half and had climbed to the ranks of leader of the Federal Liberal Party. He said nothing in defence of Aboriginal people. nor did he call to heal his party’s racial wound, Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Howard’s two years as Opposition leader, he called for Asian immigration to Australia to be reduced. The policy was called, ‘One Australia’.

In 1998, Howard campaigned on tax reform and faced an electoral wipeout. He won the election, but not the popular vote. By 2001, he’d learnt his lesson – his election slogan was ‘We’ll decide who comes to this country and the circumstances under which they come’. The ‘Tampa election’ – where Howard refused to process asylum seekers who had sunk at sea and been picked up by a passing ship – delivered a significant victory for the Liberals, and most notably, changed the political landscape in Australia.

Howard’s overt xenophobia was welcomed by a majority of voters.

By 2005, Howard was still Prime Minister when thousands of white Australians descended on Sydney’s famous Cronulla beach to riot and beat brown people – to ‘take back our beaches’, as organisers put it. The ‘protest’ had been driven in large part by Sydney shock jock Alan Jones, a mate of Howard’s. Despite the violence, and the scale of it, Howard refused to accept Australia had a problem with racism.

Two years later, he sent the Australian Army into Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory on the false pretext that it was aware of paedophile rings. The story was part of a racist campaign conceived by our national broadcaster, the ABC, and Howard and his party tried to exploit it at the next federal election. Self-harm and attempt suicide rates among the NT’s Aboriginal population more than quadrupled, anaemia rates in Aboriginal children sky-rocketed, and the government later conceded that the practice of restricting access to welfare funds caused widespread starvation among the Aboriginal population.

Only black people were subject to these laws.

Tony Abbott

When Dr James Anaya from the United Nations toured the country in 2009, he labelled the NT intervention policy – which was now being run by Labor – as ‘racist’. He was described as an ‘armchair critic’ by Australia’s future Prime Minister. Tony Abbott, a man who believes climate change is ‘crap’, whose main election slogan in 2013 was ‘stop the boats’ – a reference to mainly brown people seeking asylum – and who thought that Aboriginal people living in grinding state-engineered poverty were making ‘lifestyle choices’.

Abbott was ultimately rolled as Prime Minister, and eventually succeeded by our current leader, Scott Morrison, the man who as Abbott’s immigration minister set up the indefinite detention of refugees in camps on Manus and Nauru. Documents leaked at the time revealed that Morrison deliberately constructed the detention system to be as punitive as possible, to act as a deterrent.

There are still hundreds of men and women living this ‘deterrence’ today, trapped on these islands. This policy has also been condemned by the United Nations and the international community.

Yesterday Morrison was quick to emphasise with New Zealand, and to condemn by his parliamentary colleague. Fraser Anning, who claimed the cause of the massacre was ‘New Zealand’s immigration policy’. Morrison called Anning’s comments ‘disgusting’. They are disgusting – indeed most things Anning says are, including this recent speech calling for a ‘Final Solution’ to Australia’s immigration problem. Most of all the people in Australia in a position to condemn it, our Prime Minister is not one of them.

One nation

Fraser Anning, of course, was previously part of One Nation, a deeply racist political party headed by Pauline Hanson. For her part, Hanson was previously a member of Scott Morrison’s Liberals. She entered the parliamentary chamber last year dressed in a burqa, a stunt designed to highlight her opposition to Muslim immigration.”

In her maiden speech to parliament in 1996, she complained Australia was being swamped by Asians. By her return to parliament two decades later, she claimed Australia was now being “swamped by Muslims.” And just to that up, about two-thirds of Australians today were born here and identify their heritage as white, and Islam doesn’t even rank in the top five religions in the country, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Recently, amid a major political revival of her party, Hanson chose Mark Latham as her lead candidate in next week’s NSW state election. Latham is the former leader of the Labor Party, Australia’s other major political force. Earlier this week, Latham called for Aboriginal people to be DNA tested before they’re allowed to claim social welfare. In 2015, he told media western Sydney had a ‘Muslim problem’.

In 2017, he argued it was pointless being “nice to Muslims” to get them to tip-off police about future terrorist attacks.

Latham is expected to easily win a seat in the NSW Parliament next weekend.

Labor, Lambie, Bernardi

Those on the ‘left’ in Australia often claim that the Labor Party is much more moderate than the Liberals. Here’s former Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd describing people seeking asylum as ‘illegal immigrants’.

And here’s his predecessor, Pauline Hanson, calling all Aboriginal people for their own poverty.

Someone who might also return to the parliamentary benches at the upcoming federal election is Jacqui Lambie, a former Senator with the Palmer United Party, another of Australia’s fringe-right parties.

Boosted by the media, Lambie reached folkhero status during her term in office for being known as a ‘plain talker’. Here’s a link to Lambie ‘talking plainly’ on television about the problems with ‘Sharia Law’.

If you can’t stomach the clip – or more to the point, you simply can’t understand it – you can read a full transcript here. Or here’s a brief excerpt. Lambie asks exactly what she thinks Sharia Law is: “Shari, Shari law. um, you know, to me it’s, um, it’s, ah, it obviously involves terrorism. It, it, it involves a, um, a power that,

Tears for Christchurch: Australia first imported hate in 1788.

Now we’re in the export business.

Chris Graham

www.foe.org.au

Self-harm and attempt suicide rates among the NT’s Aboriginal population more than quadrupled, anaemia rates in Aboriginal children sky-rocketed, and the government later conceded that the practice of restricting access to welfare funds caused widespread starvation among the Aboriginal population.

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Our population is easily exposed by this craven political cynicism. That is undeniable. But the politicians and leaders can’t do it without the assistance of our media.

leaders who plough our fields with intolerance, then express condolences when people like Tarrant carry out the violence.

If we’re to find our way out of the toxic mess that we’ve built for ourselves, it’s going to require an honest reckoning of our past. That’s an enormous task, given the depth of our denial.

In responding to Fraser Anning’s comments yesterday, Prime Minister Scott Morrison also said Anning’s views had no place in Australian Parliament. In fact, those sorts of views have always been a part of Australian Parliament. This is Australia’s first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, speaking after the passage of our parliament’s first major piece of legislation in 1901, called the Immigration Restriction Act: ‘All men who come to these shores with a clean record who leave behind a memory of class distinctions and religious differences of the old world are Australians. No nigger, no Chinaman, no laska, no Kanaka, no purveyor of cheap coloured labour is an Australian.’

That legislation was known as the White Australia Policy, and remained in force until the mid-1970s (at the time the strapline of the parliament’s first major piece of legislation in 1901, called the Immigration Restriction Act: ‘All men who come to these shores with a clean record who leave behind a memory of class distinctions and religious differences of the old world are Australians. No nigger, no Chinaman, no laska, no Kanaka, no purveyor of cheap coloured labour is an Australian.’

That legislation was known as the White Australia Policy, and remained in force until the mid-1970s (at the time the strapline of the magazine which published the remarks, The Bulletin, was Australia for the white man. It finally closed its doors in 2008).

So contrary to Morrison’s assertions, these sorts of comments don’t just belong in Australian Parliament, that routinely from where they emanate.

Scott Morrison
For a way forward, we also need to acknowledge our present. If you look at Scott Morrison’s official Twitter account today, he’s posted eight times on the attack in Christchurch
at the time of press. But he pointedly avoids using the ‘M’ word, referring instead to ‘all New Zealanders’ and ‘all Kiwis’, as though the attack was not specifically targeted at Muslims.

But when the shoe is on the other foot – when two Australians were killed by a Muslim terrorist in Melbourne last year – Morrison found voice, naming and shaming the Islamic community for not doing enough to stop the violence. ‘For those who want to stick their head in the sand, for those who want to make excuses for those who stick their head in the sand, you are not making Australia safer,’ Morrison is giving people an excuse to look the other way and not deal with things right in front of you. If there are people in a religious community, an Islamic community, that are bringing in hateful, violent, extremist ideologies into your community, you’re going to call it out.”

Indeed. But what of the non-Islamic communities, who breed men like Brendon Tarrant? What are they doing? Where is the blanket condemnation of them from our Prime Minister? Why isn’t the Mayor of Grafton, where Tarrant grew up, being held to account? Or Dr Murray Harvey, the Catholic Bishop of Grafton? Besides honestly acknowledging our present, best out worst by this mess is to start applying standards equally – to treat all citizens in this country with the same respect, and afford them the same rights and courtesies. And we must demand that our elected leaders begin and uphold that process.

On that front, sadly, we do not presently have a leadership in Australia capable of the task. Our dog whistling, our Islamophobia, our racism and our political correctness has been mounting in the Prime Minister’s office – literally a trophy – in the shape of a boat, with a plaque on it that reads, “I stopped these.”

So we need to find other people to lead this nation. Our leaders stopped the boats – we need to stop their votes. We need to clean out our parliament at the May 2019 election.

“Where we sit today is a direct result of our past. It’s time we took control of our future.”

There is no other option, because while it certainly is a shock, and deeply distressing, that the man who massacred at least 49 Muslims in New Zealand was an Australian, it should also come as no surprise.

We’ve been importing and then fomenting hatred in this nation since 1788. Now, finally, we’re exporting it.

Chris Graham is the publisher and editor of New Matilda.

Reprinted from New Matilda, https://newmatilda.com/2019/09/16/tears-for-christchurch-australia-has-been-importing-hate-since-1788-now-were-in-the-export-business/
However, I found no evidence that WWF investigated the lack of free prior informed consent of the villages surrounding the forest. Villagers reported that they have never been consulted by WWF. While conducting fieldwork, WWF employees declined to be interviewed on the record.

Poaching

In November 2018, WWF announced they were relocating a single Rhinoceros that they had captured to the Kelantan Protected Forest. The existence of the only known Rhino in Kalimantan in the forest will only add more reason that the forest remains protected by armed guards and that all people, including locals, are excluded.

To be sure, asBuzzfeed also acknowledged, poaching is a serious crime that threatens the extinction of many species across the world— including the Sumatran Rhino — and protecting critically endangered species from well organised and armed poachers is dangerous, courageous work. Balancing secrecy, security and community relations cannot be easy.

Clear lines need to be drawn between international poaching syndicates and local indigenous people, even if they fish, gather, or hunt within protected areas. Local communities can provide the best defence against poachers, when they consent and are involved in forest management. Their exclusion simply breeds resentment and creates conflict.

Neo-colonialism

Although the details of both the Kelian case and Buzzfeed’s findings are disturbing, they may not come as a surprise to many environmental activists, who have been critical of NGOs and conservation groups like WWF for decades. I remember first reading about environmentalism in Chain Reaction about ten years ago. That edition drew attention to some environmental NGOs, including WWF, for their racist and neo-colonial approach to environmental conservation.

The ‘neo-colonial’ approach to the protection of wildlife and ecosystems through creating national parks means humans must be excluded — any people living in the park must be relocated.

The burden of environmental conservation is shifted from those who exploit the environment for profit onto subsistence farmers and indigenous people.

This represents a new colonialism where local people are squeezed out by plantations and mines on one side and land grabs of their most pristine areas by environmental NGOs and their funders, on the other.

There is not enough space here to describe alternatives. Suffice it to say that conservation and environmental NGOs can combine environmental protection with a proactive human rights agenda by honestly engaging and transforming histories of exploitation rather than ignoring and taking advantage of them.

Free prior informed consent remains a paper commitment for mining corporations and conservation NGOs alike. I would like to end this article with a call not to single out WWF, but to focus on the multitudes of environmental workers that we all engage in and ensure that we are not perpetuating racist or colonial practices in our own work, be it internationally or in Australia.

Lian Sinclair is a PhD student researching Australian mining corporations in Indonesia and conflicts with local communities. She acknowledges they are writing on the traditional lands of the Whadjuk Nyungah People, whose sovereignty was never ceded. @lsinclair, L.sinclair@murdoch.edu.au

References:


2. For example, the WorldWildlifeFund and ATAM (The Mining Advocacy Network) are prominent in supporting local activists.

3. Rio Tinto deserves some credit for this, because standard practice for mining companies in East Kalimantan is to neglect any kind of mine closure or rehabilitation, with the result that many villages are surrounded by dangerous abandoned open pits.

4. Rio Tintos human rights policy. Tunggul resident, interview with author, August 9, 2017

5. Ex small scale miner, Tunggul resident, interview with author, August 9, 2017


Protecting grassy plains west of Melbourne

Ben Courtice

Melbourne is eating up the western plains. Where once you could only see grasses and flowers, waving in the breeze like ripples on the ocean, all the way to the horizon — now you are more likely to see grey roof-tiles and bitumen streets.

The plains grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems left in the state, with many endangered species and a rich cultural heritage but less than 1% remaining.

It’s 10 years since the state Labor government decided to allow developers to build a huge oil slick over the farms and grasslands that had previously been protected by the urban growth boundary. The process allowing this, the Melbourne Strategic Assessment, streamlined planning approvals for developers, and in return, promised big grassland reserves which would be paid for by oil developers (some called councilman Gunnar Kielan) cleaning grassland within the new urban growth zone.

The Strategic Assessment means that the whole area under consideration has been assessed together for environmental approval; otherwise, developers would have to submit each project for environmental approval separately.

As a trade-off, a number of grassland areas are promised to be protected. The largest two comprising the 15,000 hectare Western Grassland Reserves, located west of Werribee and south of Melton.

These areas were criticised by many as being weed-infested and mostly of poor ecological value. They were to be purchased by 2020, but to date only a small percentage has been acquired, and the state government has more recently indicated it is not going to finish the acquisition process until 2040.

In 2018, a small group of conservationists met to discuss ways of conserving the grasslands better, and in November 2018, 200 people crowded into the Wyndham City Council chambers over October 12–15 for the new Grassly Plains Network’s inaugural conference, titled “Respect, Protect, Reconnect Melbourne’s Grassly Plains.”

Respect for the traditional owners of the grassy plains was first and foremost in the conference, which was organized by Wurundjeri elder Uncle Dave Wandin. He led with a discussion of Indigenous management of the grassy plains environments, including some thoughtful commentary on how indigenous use of fire differs from modern land managers (whether conservationists, or CPA).

Reg Abrahams from the Wathaurong, the other Traditional Owners of grasslands in the Melbourne area, has been advocating for Indigenous land management. This site near the You Yang range was being managed to create an Indigenous Protected

Area on the grasslands, with experiments in growing native grain, revegetation of ploughed land, and mines

Immediate concerns for conservation raised in the conference were that many remnant grasslands in the growth zone and grassland reserves area being lost slowly via weed invasion, overgrazing, and other poor management practices, while a few remaining high quality grassland patches within existing developed areas are at risk of being lost in a few scrapes of an excavator, if development goes ahead.

Speakers drew attention to two grassland reserves at Williams Landing (Laverton) that the current private owner (a subsidiary of developer Cedar Woods) has applied to develop. The site contains in particular a significant population of the endangered Spiny Rice Flower (Pimelea spiniscens). The federal Department of the Environment is currently considering the developer’s application, while local residents (who thought they were moving in next to conservation reserves) are understandably outraged.

Acquiring all the significant remnant grassland areas up front, instead of waiting while their ecological values unravel through neglect, is a key aim of the Grassly Plains Network’s. Acquiring that ecological management is put in place to protect them. While the Western Grassland Reserve project is commendable for its ambition, the challenges are enormous. Much of the area is not grassland at all, but returned farmland.

On the other hand, there are undeniably areas within it that retain their ecological value. Dr Steve Sinclair, from the state government Arthur Rylah Institute, told the conference that it would be hard to find a better contiguous area of the same size to conserve as grassland in the state.

Grasslands conservation is hampered by lack of coordination between land managers, and putting together proper oversight for the sector is another aim of the Grassly Plains Network. Although the volcanic plains grassland community was federally listed as critically endangered in 2008, there is still no recovery plan or recovery team. The conference showed strong enthusiasm for remediating this, and for incorporating Traditional Owners into scientific and land management advisory groups for the grasslands.

The Grassly Plains Network has published a declaration from the conference, available at www.grasslyplains.org.au. The Network has become a subcommittee of the Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association, which has declared its intention to incorporate the Network’s declaration. To join the Grassly Plains Network, or to stay informed of its activities, send an email to grasslyplainsnetwork@gmail.com

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The saga of Lynas Corporation and its massive piles of toxic wastes in Malaysia

Lee Tan and K.K. Tan

Australian rare earth miner Lynas Corporation is once again in the media spotlight after revealing that it would not be able to remove its radioactive waste from Malaysia by September 2019 when its operating licence will expire. Auditors Ernst and Young highlighted the risk to the company in a note attached to Lynas’ interim financial report released on 28 February 2019: ‘These concerns could be exacerbated by the existence of a material uncertainty that may cast significant doubt about the consolidated entity’s ability to continue as a going concern.’

Lynas’ rare earth supply chain has been tainted due to controversies over its location of the processing plant in Malaysia, where opposition to it has remained strong since 2011. Its Malaysian plant was constructed with the blessing of the ousted kleptocratic Prime Minister Najib Razak. Lynas never managed to obtain the social licence to operate there. However, it managed to obtain relevant licences to operate, despite not having a viable, saleable solution for its radionuclides, heavy metals and chemicals contaminated waste from a processing stream known as water-leached purification (WLP). Lynas gave Malaysia the undertaking to removing the WLP waste from Malaysia in order to obtain its operating licence. All was working well for Lynas – from a penny stock worth about 30c in 2015, its stock value climbed to a high of A$2.70 in April 2018. It was Japan’s need for rare earth elements and its more stringent pollution, this will be a toxic re-run financed by waste handling from the pollution.

The saga of Lynas Corporation and its massive piles of toxic wastes in Malaysia

Australian rare earth miner Lynas Corporation has long been linked to disastrous environmental consequences as it leaves behind massive amounts of radioactive waste that is also contaminated with toxic heavy metals and chemicals including arsenic. More stringent environmental safeguards in most advanced industrialised nations have resulted in China being a dominant supplier of rare earth oxides since the 1980s, despite the abundance of deposits around the world. Rare earth minerals are strategic commodities in advanced high smart technological sectors, used in a broad range of digital or electronic gadgets from mobile phones to high power scud missiles. They are essential elements critical for low-emissions and renewable energy technologies. Lynas claims that its processing plant creates zero harm and that its ‘residue storage facility’ is constructed based on best practice standards. However, Malaysia’s Executive Review Committee on Lynas, commissioned by the current government, has found serious groundwater contamination with toxic heavy metals such as nickel, chromium, lead and mercury. These data were collected from Lynas’ own monitoring data from test stations around its waste storage area and its final effluent discharge point. The maximum recorded contamination level of 96,110 micrograms/litre was from Lynas’ effluent discharge point, labelled as GW15. This reading is over 1,000 times higher than the Dutch intervention level of 75 micrograms/litre. Yet Lynas has nefariously tried to disassociate its poor waste handling from the pollution.

Peat mangrove

The location of Lynas’ residue storage facility on a peat mangrove has likely enhanced the dispersion of the pollutants. Unlike countries with stricter environmental law enforcement, Lynas has not been ordered to stop the contamination and/or to start to remediation to clean up the pollution. Not far from Lynas’ premises, about 50 families depend on groundwater directly for their daily uses. If Lynas’ contamination spreads further afield – which is highly likely since it is located on a low-lying peatland subject to frequent floods – the entire Balok riverine flood plain and its estuary may be heavily affected. The limited amount of data reported in the Review Report is just the tip of the iceberg of the real extent of Lynas’ pollution. Despite a change of federal government, the two regulators that have failed to independently monitor and regulate Lynas – Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) and Department of Environment (DoE) – and the state Government of Pahang (where Lynas is located) remained unchanged from the previous regime. Lynas has produced and piled up 1.5 million tonnes of toxic wastes over the past seven years. Malaysian regulations only allow on-site accumulation of a maximum of 20 tonnes for 180 days. Malaysians have no access to Lynas’ full monitoring data, hence the level of pollution from other key parameters of concern, including thorium, present in the WLP waste, has yet to be determined, even though they are serious public and environmental health hazards.

Unlike other more visible mining disasters linked to Australian miners, Lynas has committed a crime of slow violence like that of the Minamata disaster in Japan. It will take 20-40 years for the real impacts to be felt since exposure to a cocktail of low-level radioactive material like thorium and uranium, toxic heavy metals and chemicals often takes time to affect human and environmental health. It was Japan’s need for rare earth elements and its more stringent environmental safeguards since its era of pollution in the late 1960s that has resulted in Japan injecting capital into the cash-strapped Lynas’ proposal back in 2011. If Lynas fails to remove its radioactive waste from Malaysia and clean up the pollution, this will be a toxic re-run financed by Malaysia. Twenty years ago, Mitsubishi part-owned Malaysia’s first rare earth processing plant in Bukit Merah in the state of Perak. It ended with Mitsubishi spending over US$100 million quietly building a permanent dump to bury its radioactive waste and the entire plant and contaminated soil.

Radioactive waste

Lynas’ radioactive waste generated is estimated to result in an effective dose of 1 Bq/g. Lynas’ current WLP waste storage is estimated to result in an effective dose of 14 mSv/yr, which is 14 times higher than the standard international standard of 1 mSv/yr. If Malaysia ended up having to deal with Lynas’ radioactive waste and the contaminated groundwater, the implication for the Balok Mangrove and local communities is serious. Lynas’ plant is only 5 km from the South China Sea. The Balok mangrove and flood plain supports a myriad of marine and aquatic plants and organisms. The estuary and the sea are a rich fishing ground for many fishing communities dotted along the coast. In recent years, thriving and expanding tourism industries have created jobs and economic activities that support a growing population in the coastal strip. Peat is a porous and acidic medium, and combined with frequent tropical deluges and high tidal intrusions, Lynas’ contaminants are likely to spread faster than in other landscapes – both through surface overflows of leachate and leakages from its inappropriate lining. If the contamination is not arrested in time and Lynas’ WLP waste remains in its current state and location, the entire Balok Mangrove flood plain, the Balok River and its estuary may be contaminated with Lynas’ contaminants eventually. This will decimate the seafood industry of local fishermen and ruin the region’s tourism industries that employ and sustain many more than the 600 jobs at Lynas’ processing plant. As a listed company with the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX), Lynas should have acted with transparency, responsibly and ethically to comply with the ASX Corporate Governance Principle. Yet Lynas continues to claim that it is a zero-harm operation. Lynas has no track record in the safe design and operation of any rare earth plant. Australian mining corporations have long been associated with environmental disasters and human rights violations in developing nations. The self-regulating report-based ASX Corporate Governance Principle, though it looks good on paper, has not worked to hold these recalcitrant miners in check with their operations overseas. There is a need for legally binding regulations to hold Australian corporations like Lynas accountable and responsible for their activities overseas. They need to adhere to the same environmental and human rights standards as required in Australia, over and beyond merely reporting to its shareholders via the ASX or ASIC.

Lee Tan is a postgraduate research candidate at RMIT University. Dr K.K. Tan was a professor of Chemical Engineering before his retirement in 2017.
**Not That Bad: Dispatches from rape culture**

Not That Bad: Dispatches from rape culture
Edited by Roxane Gay
July 2018
Allen & Unwin www.allenandunwin.com
ISBN: 9781760529475

Edited and with an introduction by Roxane Gay, the New York Times bestselling author of Bad Feminist and Hunger, this anthology of first-person essays tackles rape, assault, and harassment head-on.

Contributors address what it means to live in a world where women have to measure the harassment, violence, and aggression they face, and where they are “routinely second-guessed, blown off, discredited, denigrated, besmirched, belittled, patronized, mocked, shamed, gazed, insulted, bullied” for speaking out.

Contributions include essays from established and up-and-coming writers, performers, and critics, including actors Ally Sheedy and Gabrielle Union and writers Amy Jo Burns, Lyz Lenz, Claire Schwartz, and Bob Shacochis. Covering a wide range of topics and experiences, from an exploration of the rape epidemic embedded in the refugee crisis to first-person accounts of child molestation, this collection is often deeply personal and is always unflinchingly honest.

Contributors offer a call to arms insisting “not that bad” must no longer be good enough.

Reviewer Seija Rankin writes:

Roxane Gay is synonymous with the personal essay. Her best-selling books, like Hunger and Bad Feminist, have become some of the most beloved commentaries on what it is to be a woman today. ... Gay’s newest book, *Not That Bad: Dispatches From Rape Culture*, is a departure from what we’ve come to associate her with ... Gay collected pieces from writers all over the country to create a haunting reflection of one of society’s biggest problems. It’s a problem that pervaded long before the outing of Harvey Weinstein and his Hollywood brethren, and wore on the book began long before the first revelations surfaced.

“This idea came to me years before the Harvey Weinstein news, simply because the way that women minimize their experiences has always been interesting to me,” Gay explained to EW.com. She noted that when she thought about what bad caused her to minimize her own experiences with sexual violence, she realized that she - and many of the women she knows - had often been told: “It’s not that bad.” “I thought, what are interesting thing to tell someone and what a terrible thing to tell someone,” said Gay. “And I wondered what other people would have to say on that subject. And then I realized that would be a great idea for an anthology.”

The process of creating Not That Bad began with a call to action: Gay set up an account where writers from all over, regardless of their pedigree or professional qualifications, could send in their own essays about sexual harassment or violence. The result was several hundred essays, which took Gay — and her assistant Melissa Moorer — months to comb through.

“I was really stunned by the level of testimony and by how many women — and men — bad such challenging and traumatic experiences with sexual violence,” Gay said. “I knew that it was widespread, but when you use submission after submission of people writing about these topics, it really starts to bring home just how problematic this culture is — and how far reaching the effects could be.

“I hope that people read this book and gain a greater understanding of how pervasive rape culture is and how damaging the effects of rape culture are,” she said. “I hope it encourages people not to minimize their experiences, and that it continues to advance the cultural conversation that we’re having about this.”

In this collection — edited by Damien Cahill and Phillip Toner from the Department of Political Science at Sydney Uni — Australia’s leading economists and public intellectuals do a cost-benefit analysis of the key economic reforms, including child care, aged care, housing, banking, prisons, universities and the NBN. Have these reforms for the Australian community and its economy been worthwhile? Have they given us a better society, as promised?

Michael Pusey, author of the 1991 classic Economic Rationalism in Canberra, writes: “Cahill and Toner get it right. Neoliberal economic reform is indeed the wrong way because it undermines good governance, increases inequality and reduces our quality of life. Wrong Way is a finely crafted, clear and inviting analysis of all that is wrong with Australia’s experiment with neoliberalism.”

Emeritus Professor Roy Green from UTS writes: “Australia has been subjected to a thirty-year economic experiment under the catch-all title of “neoliberalism”. This important book is an audit of the outcomes and impact of this experiment. Has privatisation led to more productivity-enhancing competition, or less? Has deregulation increased economic welfare in energy, finance, health, education and labour markets, or not? Indeed, does the lived experience of Australians measure up to the promise of economic reform? The authors now have access to a comprehensive database with which to answer these questions. And they do so with conclusions that are both compelling and disturbing.”

Academic economist John Quiggin writes in The Guardian: “The Greens’ proposal for a publicly owned electricity retailer is the latest to emerge from across the political spectrum arguing for renewed public intervention. The Queensland Labor government has committed to the establishment of a publicly owned renewable electricity generator, to be called CleanCo. At the federal level, the Labor leader, Bill Shorten, has repeatedly stated that electricity privatisation was a mistake. The LNP government is still committed to the $20 billion hydro scheme, while the climate denialist faction wants public money for a new coal-fired power station.

“This renewed appetite for public ownership is accompanied by general recognition that the national electricity market has been a complete failure. As I discuss in my contribution to a new book, *Wrong Way, How Privatisation and Economic Reform Backfired*, microeconomic reform has failed in every part of the electricity supply system.”

“Unfortunately, no one has much of an idea about what to do about the problem. Restoration of public ownership will help but the system needs to be redesigned from the ground up. Before putting forward blueprints for a redesign, it’s important to consider, at a more fundamental level, what went wrong.”

“Certainly, privatisation was a mistake and markets haven’t yielded the promised benefits but electricity systems with predominantly private ownership and designed markets have performed relatively well in some places. For example, the Electricity Reliability Council of Texas (Ercot) has done a good job in managing the transition from coal-fired power to renewables while holding prices down.

“Why has Australia done so badly? The reform process in Australia has treated markets and competition as goals in themselves, rather than as policy instruments designed to produce useful price signals and thereby guide investment and consumption decisions. ... Finally, there is retail competition. Retail price policy should have two goals. The first, obviously, is to keep prices as low as possible while covering the costs of supply. The second is to allow consumers to manage their demand so as to use more electricity when it is cheap. To achieve this with any accuracy, it is necessary to use smart meters, capable of allowing flexible pricing.

“As with everything else, Australia’s electricity reformers made a hash of this. After a ham-fisted attempt to force Victorian consumers to pay for new meters in 2009, the whole idea was soft-pedalled. Meanwhile, under the banner of choice and open markets, reformers pushed ahead with full retail competition.”

Wrong Way: How privatisation and economic reform backfired
Wrong Way: How Privatisation and Economic Reform Backfired
Damien Cahill and Phillip Toner (editors)
September 2018
Paperback ISBN: 9781760640385
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Adani and the war over coal

Adani and the War Over Coal
Quentin Beresford
August 2018
ISBN 978174235936
NewSouth Publishing

Review by John Biggs
Dr Quentin Beresford’s The Rise and Fall of Guinn Ltd describes how successive Tasmanian governments gave timber corporation Guinn a monopoly of the forestry industry. Guinn became immensely rich, while the Government’s Forestry Tasmania went into increasing debt. The damage to the Tasmanian landscape, to the public purse and to public respect for politicians was immense. And all for nothing, for Guinn implored through its own greed, poor planning and hubris: the classic story of crony capitalism. The Adani story is worse – politically and morally. Around the turn of this century, there was a frantic rush by China and India to industrialise. Both countries then saw that coal was the way to go. The Australian Galilee Basin contains huge deposits of high-grade coal and several companies fought for the privilege of extracting it, including Adani, another Indian company in cahoots with Gina Rinehart, a Chinese company and Clive Palmer. Conservation groups, Indigenous people and, eventually, a strong majority of ordinary Australians are opposed to this book. Dr Beresford brings his sharp research and writing skills to tell this story of the war over coal.

Gautam Adani had close connections with India’s PM Narendra Modi, who protected Adani over environmental and human rights violations in India. Adani donated heavily to both major Australian parties, especially to the Coalition. The Abbott and subsequent Coalition governments pushed for Adani as hard as they could. At first, so did Labor, but then not so much, but if certain conditions are met, well, maybe…

The major issues in dispute, as Beresford see it, are as follows.

- Economic case: The costs of mining coal are now higher than the costs of producing renewables - and the difference is rapidly widening. With Adani’s projected costs, current debts and likely returns, Adani is predicted to lose crippling amounts of money if it proceeds.

- Adani’s poor safety, criminal and environmental record
  - First in India and now Adani, operations have already badly polluted land in the Carmichael region. Given all of this, why on Earth would Australian governments be so determined to support the Adani project?
  - Beresford discusses these issues and others in depth. His findings and assertions are fully referenced, his arguments convincing.

- Great Barrier Reef: The Reef is already seriously endangered by climate change, drainage from fertilised farmlands, and starfish. The mine would make matters immeasurably worse, as dredging (authorised by Indian, Chinese and all four major Australian banks, as well as Adani’s level of indebtedness, it surely looks like game over. However, given the skullduggery and/or gullibility of so many politicians, it seems the level of butchery in the shadows, the final result is still too soon to call.

  This book should be of extreme interest to every Australian. It is a fascinating read, and like all of his work, his arguments fully referenced, his findings and assertions convincing.

Economic case: The costs of mining coal are now higher than the costs of producing renewables - and the difference is rapidly widening. With Adani’s projected costs, current debts and likely returns, Adani is predicted to lose crippling amounts of money if it proceeds.

Adani’s poor safety, criminal and environmental record

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This book should be of extreme interest to concerned citizens, while all politicians should be locked in a room to read it, not to be let out until they can pass a comprehension test on its contents. John Biggs is a writer who lives in Hobart. Reprinted from Independent Australia.
The story of a weed killer, cancer and the corruption of science

Whitewash: The Story of a Weed Killer, Cancer and the Corruption of Science
Carey Gillam
November 2017
Island Press

In Whitewash: The Story of a Weed Killer, Cancer and the Corruption of Science, Carey Gillam uncovers one of the most controversial stories in the history of food and agriculture, exposing new evidence of corporate influence. It’s the pesticide on our dinner plates, a chemical so pervasive it’s in the air we breathe, our water, our soil, and even found increasingly in our own bodies. Known as Monsanto’s Roundup by consumers, and as glyphosate by scientists, the world’s most popular weed killer is used everywhere from backyard gardens to golf courses to millions of acres of farmland. For decades it’s been touted as safe enough to drink, but a growing body of evidence indicates just the opposite: with research tying the chemical to cancers and a host of other health threats.

Gillam uncovers one of the most controversial stories in the history of food and agriculture, exposing new evidence of corporate influence. She introduces readers to farm families devastated by cancers which they believe are caused by the chemical, and to scientists whose reputations have been smeared for publishing research that contradicted business interests. Readers learn about the arm-twisting of regulators who signed off on the chemical, echoing company assurances of safety even as they permitted evidence indicating just the opposite, with research tying the chemical to cancers and a host of other health threats.

The Women’s Atlas

The Women’s Atlas
Joni Seager
November 2018
NewSouth Books
ISBN 9781742236186

This survey of global data illustrates the status of women worldwide and the diversity of their experiences.

Through infographics, the atlas portrays how women are living across continents and cultures – the advances that have been made and the distances still to be travelled. Issues covered include: gender equality, literacy and information technology, feminism, the culture of beauty, work and the global economy, changing households, domestic violence, LGBTIQ+ rights, government and power, and motherhood.

Joni Seager is Professor of Global Studies at Bentley University in Boston, a geographer and global policy expert. She is consultant to the UN on gender and environmental policy.

’T: The Women’s Atlas puts inequality into clear, confronting perspective and inspires us to do more for all women,’ says Rosie Batty, domestic violence campaigner and 2015 Australian of the Year.

The Mess We’re In – Bernard Keane

The Mess We’re In: How Our Politics Went to Hell and Dragged Us with It
Bernard Keane
August 2018
Allen & Unwin – www.allenandunwin.com

Crickey correspondent Bernard Keane explains capitalism, identity and Why Everything Is Awful. A tide of populism and xenophobia is sweeping the western world. Disillusioned voters are turning to political outsiders and increasingly rejecting the liberal economic solutions of out-of-touch elites. Despite having access to more information than at any time in human history, we are turning our backs on experts, evidence and facts themselves in a new Era of Electronic Ignorance. Many warn darkly of a repeat of the chaos, misery and war of the 1930s.

How did it all go so wrong? The Mess We’re In explains how a perfect storm of historical developments has left us fearing that a Dark Age is fast approaching. How the triumphant economic philosophy of neoliberalism has failed us and provoked a backlash that is sweeping it aside. How the internet is rewiring our economies, our media, our culture and even our own brains. How politics has become a hallowed-out industry of self-interest rather than a public service. And how, together, they’ve unleashed a wave of anger and fear that has engulfed the world.

The book is divided into the following sections:

• symptoms of chaos: a thematic history of 2016–2018
• neoliberalism and its discontents
• (un)government
• the internet – weapon of mass disruption
• repairing the precarious crust

Former Greens Senator Scott Ludlam writes: ‘A powerful and occasionally polemical appeal to reason in politics; if you’re despairing in search of an antidote to the poison of ‘alternative facts’, here’s your book. Like any good political text, there’s something here to offend everyone. You’ll want to cheer, high-five and occasionally shout your disagreement, but what you won’t want to do is put it down.’

Yes Yes Yes: Australia’s journey to marriage equality

Yes Yes Yes: Australia’s journey to marriage equality
Alex Greenwich and Shirleeene Robinson
November 2018
NewSouth Books

Yes Yes Yes, written by two advocates intimately involved in the struggle for marriage equality, reveals the story of how a grassroots movement won hearts and minds and transformed a country.

The book provides a moving account of some of the people who worked to achieve marriage equality. It locates intimate, personal stories and community-driven experiences of campaigning alongside the broader social and political context to tell the full, extraordinary story of just how the marriage equality movement succeeded in achieving a fairer and more equal Australia.

Yes Yes Yes captures the passion that propelled the movement forward, weaving together stories of heartbeat, hope and triumph. It is based on personal memories and more than 20 interviews with key figures and everyday advocates from across Australia. It covers the movement’s origins in 2004, when the Marriage Act of 1961 was amended to exclude same-sex couples, through to the unsuccessful High Court challenge, a public vote in 2017 and the Parliamentary aftermath.

‘A wonderful record of a huge and heart-warming moment in Australia’s history,’ says Magda Szubanski.

Alex Greenwich is an Independent MP for Sydney and Co-Chair of Australian Marriage Equality. Shirleeene Robinson has published extensively on aspects of LGBTIQ history. She is national spokesperson of Australian Marriage Equality and President of Sydney’s Pride History Group. Her previous publications include Serving in Silence?: Australian LGBTIQ servicemen and women with Noah Rosen and Graham Willett (NewSouth, 2018), and Gay and Lesbian, Then and Now: Stories from a Social Revolution with Robert Reynolds.
Vandana Shiva: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom

Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom
Vandana Shiva with Karthkey Shiva
September 2018
ISBN 9781925581799

The book is a challenge to the global corporations who continue to take far more than they will ever give. Vandana Shiva looks at the financial inequalities and lays out a way in which these might be changed so that the Earth has a future.

Widespread poverty and malnutrition, an alarming refugee crisis, social unrest, and economic polarisation have become our lived reality as the top 1% of the world’s seven-billion-plus population pushes the planet – and all its people – to the social and ecological brink. Shiva takes on the Billionaires Club of Gates, Buffett, Zuckerberg and other modern Mughals, whose blindness to the rights of people, and to the destructive impact of their construct of progress, have wrought havoc across the world. Their single-minded pursuit of profit has undemocratically enforced uniformity and monocultures, division and separation, monopolies and external control – over finance, food, energy, information, healthcare, and even relationships.

The author exposes the one-percent’s model of philanthrocapitalism, which is about deploying unaccountable money to bypass democratic structures, derail diversity, and impose totalitarian ideas, based on One Science, One Agriculture and One History. Vandana Shiva calls for the “resurgence of real knowledge, real intelligence, real wealth, real work, real well-being”.

Vandana Shiva is a world-renowned environmental thinker and activist, a leader in the International Forum on Globalisation, and of the Slow Food Movement. Director of Navdanya and of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, and a tireless crusader for farmers’, peasants’ and women’s rights. She is the author and editor of a score of influential books, among them Making Peace with the Earth, Soil Not Oil, Seed Sovereignty, Food Security: Women in the Vanguard.

Hoodwinked: How Pauline Hanson fooled a nation

Hoodwinked: How Pauline Hanson fooled a nation
Kerry-Anne Walsh
October 2018
ISBN 9781760112288
Allen & Unwin, www.allenandunwin.com

Pauline Hanson claims to represent the average Australian but Kerry-Anne Walsh has discovered nothing could be further from the truth. Very few public figures can claim the level of fame, or infamy, that Pauline does. So much so, her surname isn’t needed. Everyone knows her, or knows of her, and nearly everyone has a passionate viewpoint about her.

So who is Pauline Hanson, the woman and politician? Does she really stand for the battler, or has it only ever been about her personal pursuit for power and infamy? Has she duped her loyal supporters, who have kept her in the public eye and propelled her back into parliament because she “speaks for them”? Pulling no punches, and with a finely developed sense of the absurd, Walsh’s conclusion is an emphatic yes.

Walsh uncovers the many faces of Pauline Hanson, her time as an accidental local councillor, her emergence as a national figure in 1996 and her resurrection in 2016, her careful profile-building through the media during the intervening years, the friends she’s used and discarded, the men who control her, the money trail of her party and her personal finances. And then there’s the rise of the disaffected voters who now control political destinies, and the collapse of trust in the system that has allowed chancers such as Hanson to flourish.

Walsh was in the Canberra press gallery for 25 years. Disenchanted with political spin and the nature of political reporting, she left the gallery in 2009 to establish her consultancy KA Communications. Her book The Stalking of Julia Gillard won the 2014 Australian Book Industry Award for the best non-fiction book of the year.
Students Strike for Climate Action
March 15, 2019

Clockwise from top left:
Darwin, Cairns, Melbourne, Townsville, Sydney, Melbourne, Mackay, Kuranda