



# Annual Report

Lock the Gate Alliance

# 2020





## Lock the Gate vision

**Healthy, empowered communities which have fair, democratic processes available to them to protect their land and water and deliver sustainable solutions to food and energy needs.**

## Our mission

**To protect Australia's natural, cultural and agricultural resources from inappropriate mining and to educate and empower all Australians to demand sustainable solutions to food and energy production.**

## A message from the Chair of the Board

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land that was never ceded and acknowledge Elders. I particularly wish to thank those Traditional Owners who have led the way protecting country from reckless coal and gas proposals.

This year we have seen the shocking destruction of the Juukan Gorge, an incredibly ancient and sacred site, by Rio Tinto. As a nation, it's time to say, 'never again' and to commit ourselves to prevent similar desecration of the heritage of First Nations peoples.

2020 has been a year of extremes. The year started with some of the worst bushfires our nation has experienced, followed in many areas by flooding. Tens of thousands of people in rural and regional areas have suffered terribly. The impacts on many of our native animal populations have been appalling with deaths estimated in the billions. This situation has been exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic and associated restrictions.

On the other hand, following good rains in many parts of the country, it is a great relief to see many farmers in our movement producing strong harvests. After the drought and the fires, the rain was desperately needed, and has been a boon for our rural communities.

The Lock the Gate Alliance has survived well under these adverse conditions. It's a testament to the resilience of our staff, but also to the fact that many of them are on the ground in mining affected communities and are able to carry on their work as part of those communities.

I have been particularly impressed this year by the way the staff has forged collaborations with key organisations such as the trade unions and others in the Hunter under the banner of the Hunter Jobs Alliance. Alliance building and empowerment of communities are in the DNA of Lock the Gate. It's also incredibly positive to see community renewable energy projects powering ahead in places like Narrabri.

With the Federal government's totally misconceived "gas-led recovery" initiative, Lock the Gate is going to have to step up as never before. The Narrabri gasfield will be a major focus, with Santos pressing strongly to start drilling after the disappointing result from the Independent Planning Commission. The Beetaloo Basin in the heart of the Territory, and the Kimberly region in WA are also seriously threatened by unconventional gas mining. In addition, many of these areas are under threat from massive, destructive gas pipelines.

I am hopeful that Lock the Gate is up to the challenge. This challenge will mean that we have to keep learning and adapting, finding new ways to support communities, and building financial and human resources to prevent the onslaught envisaged by the gas industry.

The Board would like to offer its sincere thanks to our staff and contractors, and to the volunteers who work so hard for regional communities across the country. The Directors know staff and supporters can be very exposed to the might of the powerful fossil fuel industries, their multinational backers and their local supporters. It is a tribute to the extraordinary determination and resilience of our staff and volunteers, plus the support of their communities, that they keep going. The Board is particularly grateful for the work of the national team, for their commitment and consummate skill in a wide range of critically important areas. Naomi Hogan has excelled in taking on additional load due to some illnesses amongst staff this year and the Board is extremely grateful to her.

I would like to thank the Board for their dedication and hard work. Board members are volunteers and have willingly applied their many skills to the development of Lock the Gate. I would particularly like to thank Adam Blakester for his years of dedicated service as he will not be seeking re-election. We will miss his vastly experienced and incisive mind, combined with his gentle humour and compassion. We wish him well with his future initiatives.

For strong resilient communities and an end to inappropriate mining,



Simon Clough

# Lock the Gate



## Our Work

Lock the Gate (LTG) is a unique organisation. Our roots are proudly in rural and regional Australia and foundational to our work is the support and empowerment of communities. LTG endeavours to employ local people as coordinators and works hard to help enable local communities and their leaders to advocate with politicians, mining companies and government agencies.

LTG is working with local communities in the face of dozens of big new coal mines and hundreds of gasfield licences across Australia, plus new gas pipelines.

Over a third of the Australian landmass is covered in coal and petroleum licences and applications. We're up against coal seam gas, tight gas, shale gas and coal and oil. We're calling out abandoned open cut mine pollution and leaking gas emissions. We're taking on some of the biggest mining and extraction companies in Australia. We're standing with locals to stop inappropriate mines and gas drilling.



## The Movement

Lock the Gate is a huge network of networks. From the tip of the Kimberly to the far reaches of Tasmania, the Lock the Gate movement has collaborated to build strong regional alliances. Working together, we have assisted over 465 empowered communities to declare themselves coal and gasfield free. More than 80 local Councils have got involved in standing up to mining projects and applications.

This year, people everywhere were challenged by the terrifying bushfires that ripped through huge parts of regional Australia, and then the global pandemic that significantly changed how we work together across the country. It has been incredibly humbling to be part of the broader Lock the Gate community that supported one another through these times, took breaks where needed to care for family, and also stepped up to take on massive inappropriate mining and gas projects. In the face of these challenges, the network has also been battling increased pressure to open up new onshore gas basins, putting water and communities at risk.

The network has responded to all the threats with determination, care and optimism for our shared future. We strive to be a useful support to this powerful community movement for the protection of land, water and people everywhere.



# Our Team



*Celebrating 10 years of Lock the Gate in 2020*

Lock the Gate has a team of about 28 employees and contractors across a variety of full time and part time roles. We all bring unique and broad skills, local connections and committed input to campaigns across the country. LTG staff are passionate about the work they do to protect Australian communities from coal and gas. Our team works to protect land, water and communities across WA, NT, QLD and NSW and have supported incredible community-driven work in SA, VIC and TAS.

## Meet the board of directors

Lock the Gate is ably supported by seven volunteer directors who willingly donate their time to oversee governance of the organisation.

### **Simon Clough**

Simon has chaired the board for seven years. He has been active in grassroots community work for over 50 years, including a significant role in keeping the Northern Rivers of NSW gasfield free. He served for eight years on Lismore City Council with three years as Deputy Mayor. Simon has worked as a professional mediator for over 20 years.

### **Sarah Moles**

Sarah has been a member of the Board since its inception. She has a long history of involvement in natural resource management and water issues across the Murray Darling and Great Artesian Basins. Sarah lives on the Darling Downs.

### **Benjamin Cochrane**

Ben is a practicing criminal lawyer and has defended a number of protesters involved in keeping the northern rivers gasfield free in recent years. He has worked and volunteered in a number of environmental agencies, most recently volunteering with the Stop Adani campaign in Lismore.

### **Marcia (Meg) Nielsen**

Meg joined her husband Peter on their farm in the Northern Rivers of NSW in 1993 where they established stonefruit, macadamias & coffee orchards with cattle, using sustainable, environmental practices. Joining Lock the Gate in 2013, Meg & Peter Nielsen were part of the campaign to keep the Northern Rivers gasfield free & represented the Bentley farmers making trips to NSW Parliament to lobby the State government.

Committed to care of the natural world & action on climate change, Meg is a committee member of the North Coast Environment Council, a member of the North East Forest Alliance & Farmers for Climate Action. She presents a weekly community radio program with invited guests who discuss environmental issues & correct the all too frequent misinformation.

### **Adam Blakester**

Adam is a sustainability entrepreneur and social change strategist with diverse environmental, community, business and government experience. With qualifications originally in accounting and taxation law, Adam brings strong business and organisational acumen with expertise in leadership, management, community development, facilitation and communication.



### **Nicky Chirlian**

Nicky and her partner Craig Carter produce beef cattle using regenerative agriculture strategies. Nicky is the current Chair of Upper Mooki Landcare Inc. and an original member of the North West Alliance. She has been an active on ground campaigner against the Narrabri Coal Seam Gas Project, the Caroon BHP Project and the Shenhua Watermark mine. Nicky worked extensively on the Gunnedah Basin Health Impact Assessment and joined Lock the Gate in state and Federal Parliaments lobbying for its implementation. Nicky is a current Board member of Quirindi Care Services, a community NFP providing facility and community Aged Care.

### **Rob Tulloch**

Rob is a Chartered Accountant who has been in professional practice for over 35 years. In his practice he has been involved with many Charitable and Not-For-Profit (NFP) organisations both as an auditor and as an advisor.

Rob has also sat on the boards of numerous charitable and NFP organisations and was one of the founding directors of OzHarvest. Rob became involved in Lock the Gate through the WAGE (Wollombi against Gas Extraction) campaign in the Hunter. He is committed to community service having been closely involved in a number of sporting organisation and has been a volunteer member of the NSW Rural Fire Service for over 30 years.

## **Chairperson's Report**

Lock the Gate's systems of accountability in both the financial and human areas of activity are working well. The Board has been further developing its suite of policies through the Governance and Compliance Committee and the Board continues developing a strong culture and policy around work and safety issues.

Lock the Gate has worked within the ambit of its charitable purpose this year. We have continued as a member of the Community Council for Australia.



# Coordinator's Report



It has been a big year for the network, with success on several key projects through impactful opposition to inappropriate mining and hard yakka from local communities. We have exposed a culture of unlawfulness within a major coal player in Australia, Whitehaven Coal, and have achieved some final important law reform on mine rehabilitation in Queensland.

This year, our team and the broader network adapted to working together online, with skills growing in web-based meeting tools. We have run several successful and well-attended webinars for our key areas of work across the country, including the powerful voices of Traditional Owners, energy experts, scientists and community leaders.

The move to online meetings meant that regional and remote people on the front lines of inappropriate mining were able to more easily participate and connect up with people from across the country. While we all missed the face to face interactions, the network continued to grow strongly and work together.

Some of the exciting things we have been able to achieve this year include driving a new campaign, Ready for Renewables, focusing on the incredible opportunities across Australia to build regional work opportunities and harness energy with renewables backed up with batteries.



# Campaign snapshot for 2020

**Local communities across Australia are out in numbers to stand up for their water supplies in the face of inappropriate mining and fracking threats. Here is a little insight into some of the incredible work happening around the country.**

## Unlawful Water Take

Our continued focus on water protection has seen coal miner Whitehaven Coal feel significant pressure for multiple compliance failures and workforce and environmental difficulties.

Whitehaven Coal are being prosecuted by the Natural Resources Access Regulator for taking surface water without a licence at the Maules Creek mine after a detailed complaint which we provided about the issue. We also compiled a dossier of Whitehaven's history of non-compliance and submitted it to the NSW Resources Regulator.

Whitehaven are also facing an additional two prosecutions for other legal breaches and have also been fined for polluting waterways and have had an exploration licence suspended for illegal clearing.

## Bylong Coal Mine

This past year we've continued to support the work to protect the incredible Bylong Valley. Korean mining giant KEPCO launched a legal appeal against the decision by the NSW Government to reject the Bylong coal mine. However, the NSW Government elected not to defend their decision in court.

Instead, the local community group, Bylong Valley Protection Alliance, bravely stepped into that breach. They have joined as a party to the case and their lawyers were a crucial part of a hearing on the matter in the Land and Environment Court held this year. A decision is yet to be made by the court. We have supported the Alliance with media and technical advice as they take on KEPCO again.



## NT Fracking

Strong and sustained community opposition and the realities of the COVID pandemic led to both Origin and Santos putting their plans for fracking in the Beetaloo and McArthur Basin on hold until next year. There has also been growing pressure on Origin, with a dozen Local Councils from across the country who purchase energy from Origin encouraging them to respect the concerns raised by Traditional Owners and choose renewables over fracked gas from the Beetaloo Basin.

At the same time, support for renewables in the NT continues to surge. The Chief Minister recently acknowledged that renewables can deliver both jobs and cheap and reliable energy, thus enabling the territory to become a hub for manufacturing and data storage.



## WA Fracking

We have worked hard with communities from across the state to strengthen the laws around fracking, including more protections for waterways, the right to say no and no-go zones from fracking. There have been beautiful gasfield free community declaration days, and empowering work with local councils in the Mid West region. This year saw the activities by local farmers bearing fruit with a key National Party MP speaking up against fracking in agricultural areas.

Thousands of people have also joined the campaign to support Traditional Owners seeking to protect the Kimberley from fracking. More than 6,500 submissions were made to the WA Government's 'Iconic Natural Heritage Places' consultation seeking better protection for the globally significant natural and cultural values of the region in accordance with the aspirations of Traditional Owners.

## Hunter Diversification

It has been an incredibly significant year for Hunter Renewal in NSW. We have built very wide support for diversification, from business big and small, unions, local government and community members.

Crucially, we have been able to help develop a Hunter Jobs Alliance between key unions and environment groups. This past year, we held a number of very successful webinars with high attendance bringing key stakeholder groups together with our supporters to talk about alternative job opportunities in the region.

We presented to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW, with an emphasis on the opportunities in renewable energy and measures needed to support affected communities to diversify their economies.

## Kingaroy Coal Mine

One of the most outstanding outcomes of the year was the withdrawal by Moreton Resources of their plans to build the South Burnett coal mine on the famously fertile soils surrounding Kingaroy. The proposed coal mine was abandoned after sustained community opposition (led by the brilliant Kingaroy Concerned Citizens Group) and financial difficulties for the proponent.

Locals in the Kingaroy area now want the government to permanently protect the land from any future mining proposal. They are working closely with us to push for reform of the Qld Regional Planning Interest Act to achieve this goal.





## Narrabri Gasfield

The Narrabri Gas Project received the largest ever number of submissions to the IPC and the greatest ever number of speakers registered to present to a public hearing. Overall, there were 11,000 unique submissions to the Planning Commission on the project, with a vast majority opposed to it. There were also 404 speakers that presented to the public hearing and 94% of those opposed the project.

Unfortunately, the Planning Commission chose to ignore this extraordinary deluge of community opposition and instead approved the project despite major risks to water and biodiversity. This was a blow to the people of the north-west, but it is by no means the end of the struggle. Local people have valiantly picked themselves up, pushing forward with their ambitious new community renewables project and banding together to prevent the associated gas pipelines.

The community pressure did lead to a long list of more stringent constraints on the project, including a requirement to upgrade the water model and to have an approved location and plan for waste management prior to the project proceeding to full production. The community is garnering strong legal scrutiny of the approvals and is on the ground scrutinising the legality of Santos current exploration as well.



## Baralaba South Coal Mine

We have been supporting communities fighting coal mine proposals in other prime farming areas in Queensland. The Baralaba South coal project on floodplains in Central Queensland puts a precious food producing area at risk.

The local community undertook a survey of their whole community, with the result showing that there is overwhelming opposition to the coal mine. The community has been incredible at stepping up and speaking out to oppose the mine through the media.





## QLD Mine Rehabilitation

This year, we have achieved one of the final components of the mine rehabilitation reforms we have sought in Queensland, the formation of a new statutory role of Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner.

As a key part of this push, we worked with local communities to expose failures in mine rehabilitation standards with several coal mines in Central Queensland (Ensham and Baralaba) and in south-east Queensland (Jeebropilly and Ebenezer).

Once appointed, the Commissioner will audit mine rehabilitation performance in Queensland against world best practice and set rehabilitation standards, which should lead to stronger controls and increased accountability for the sector.

## Protecting Regional Lands in Qld

In Queensland, our Plan to Grow campaign has exposed the scale of mining impact on priority farmland and areas of significance to regional communities.

This year we have held a number of webinars highlighting economic alternatives to mining for regional Queensland and exposing the threats to farmland from mining and gas. We also created a new interactive map showing the distribution of mining licences in Queensland revealing for the first time that 7.7 million hectares of the highest value agricultural and environmental lands in Queensland are covered by mining or gas titles.

We've provided advice on generating alternative economic opportunities in key regions and built the number of community groups working together to achieve no go zones and for legislative reform.



# Treasurer's Report

It is my pleasure to provide the following report for inclusion in our Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2020.

Income for the financial year was up \$1,076,659 as a result of both increased donations (\$344,350) & increased grants received (\$574,807). Grants are received each year to conduct various campaign programs & activities. Grants are hence variable as they are dependent upon the current programs & activities of the company. As a result of Covid 19 the company's activities were restricted and therefore expenditure on those activities was deferred. This deferred expenditure will occur in the 2020-21 financial year.

The main asset on the balance sheet is the cash on hand amounting to \$2,046,900, a significant proportion of which, will be used to fund the Alliance's activities in the coming year. There are no material liabilities as at 30 June 2020.