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MEDIA RELEASE

Future Visions – Future Nightmares

As the bosses of the booming resources industry gather to deliberate on ‘future visions’ for the mining, resources and energy sectors, environmentalists are lamenting the continued emphasis on coal and coal seam gas as a source of energy and export income for Australia.

“Given the theme of the NQ Mining, Resources and Energy Conference being held in Townsville on 14 and 15 May 2012 – ‘Future Visions and a Snapshot of Today’ – it would be good to look closely at what Townsville and Australia would look like in the future if the rush to establish massive coal mines, increase six-fold coal export facilities, and drill tens of thousands of coal seam gas wells continues” said Wendy Tubman, Coordinator of North Queensland Conservation Council.

“We know that UNESCO is already extremely concerned about the impact of vast coal exporting facilities on the Great Barrier Reef.

“Add to this the loss of habitat and farming land, the massive demands for water, the toxic waste output, the negative impact on families and communities associated with fly-in-fly-out workforces, the costs of a two-speed economy to manufacturing, the loss of tourism appeal, the risks to health and the contribution to climate change, and it is obvious that the future could look very grim indeed.”

Ms Tubman noted that, while the coal industry claims to be of great benefit to Australia, in April last year it employed just 51,900 people, less than 0.5% of the Australian workforce. The mining sector as a whole directly employed less than 2% of Australia’s workforce, accounts for less than 10% of GDP, pays an average of 13.9% tax and sends over 80% of profits overseas to foreign investors.

“And we also know that an expanded Townsville Port is being mooted as a coal export terminal” she said.

Bankers and investors are already discussing the ‘carbon bubble’ – what happens when, in the not too distant future, the demand for coal dries up. What will be left of Australia’s environment and lifestyle then?

Coal is a dinosaur – we have the resources and technology now to replace fossil fuels. It is time for Australians to stand up and say ‘enough is enough’ – the costs are too great for the short-term benefit to a few.

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