

Spinifex

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MINE REHAB
REFORM

CORAL BLEACHING UPDATE

HELP STOP LAND CLEARING

INDIGENOUS YOUTH
CLIMATE NETWORK
SAYS NO TO FOSSIL
FUELS

**We support
renewable energy
for our children's
children**



Queensland
Conservation

Welcome to Spinifex

How do we create a new vision for environmental protection in Queensland? Across Queensland there are thousands of people working to protect the environment. But we're still seeing greenhouse pollution rising, we're seeing the impacts of global warming hitting our Great Barrier Reef, we're seeing the impacts from land clearing hurting our Koala's and other threatened species, we're still seeing traditional owners being ignored in favour of big coal and we're seeing mining companies go bankrupt and leave a mess for Queenslanders to clean up.

But we're also seeing people demanding action. Demanding that politicians step up and adopt positive policies that will protect our environment. We can no longer sit by and let our indigenous people's rights be ignored in favour of big mines, we can lead by divesting, by choosing renewables and supporting community renewables, by standing up for real change.

And we're already seeing that coal is in decline and that keeping coal in the ground will be good for our communities. Now we just need our leaders to say NO to digging up more coal.

This edition of Spinifex highlights many of these issues, it's about communities demanding change and it's about raising our concerns to Federal and State politicians. We know that climate change is real, we know that land clearing destroys precious koala habitat, we know the reef can't handle higher temperatures. We should be expecting more – **Because it's 2016!**



Picture: Blair Athol Mine

Mining Rehabilitation Reform Long Overdue

Rick Humphries is the Coordinator of the Mine Rehabilitation Reform Campaign for Lock the Gate and outlines why reform is needed to address the mountains of waste left over from abandoned mines in Queensland.

The Minerals Council of Australia assures the public that the industry is committed to ensuring that “previously mined land is available for future economic activity, conservation or community use.” This is pretty well aligned with what most fair-minded people assume - that after mining companies have finished exploiting the resource and making a good, sometimes extraordinary, profit they make good on their obligations to rehabilitate their mine sites.

The reality is of course very different.

Queensland now has some 15,000 registered abandoned mines. While many are very small and low impact there are 120 to 130 medium sized abandoned mine sites most likely to have infrastructure, such as tailings dams and 317 giant,

very large, large or medium sized abandoned mines. The cost of repairing these abandoned mines falls on the Queensland taxpayer. The bill is in the billions, mine rehabilitation being a very expensive exercise.

The size of this rehabilitation is unfortunately set to grow with the addition of the Texas Silver Mine south of Stanthorpe which went bankrupt last year adding another estimated \$10m to the State's abandoned mines deficit. The announcement of the bankruptcy of world's largest coal company, Peabody Energy, which operates six mines in Queensland, raises the prospect that these mines will not be able to meet their mine rehabilitation obligations adding hundreds of millions of dollars, perhaps more than a billion to the bill.

Successful mine rehabilitation is best measured by what is termed, ‘mine relinquishment’. Once the mining company has satisfied all the rehabilitation goals and objectives and other legal requirements the mining lease is terminated and the ex-mine site is either handed back to the Government or sold to a third party. The fact is that there has not been a single successful relinquishment of a major mine site in Queensland in the last 30 years. That's a pretty damning indictment of both the industry and the government regulators.

And let's look at the goals and objectives of mine rehabilitation in Queensland and how it relates to that industry claim. Again it's time for a reality check. Far from the land being returned to a useable state, the Government has been approving rehabilitation plans that are designed to leave huge pits, mountains of waste and mine waste dams covering, in some cases, hundreds of hectares.

Most of the pits will fill with water over time, and in the majority of cases, will become saline and toxic. The industry's solution is to put fences around these huge eyesores to discourage people and wildlife (not birds obviously) from accessing these toxic lakes.

The waste dumps and tailings will be covered using a combination of clay, rock and other materials designed to prevent acid, metalliferous drainage that can pollute groundwater and the surrounding environment including creeks and rivers. The track record of the industry in this regard is woeful. Mt Leyshon, Mt Oxide, Mt Morgan and the old Mary Kathleen uranium mine are all signature examples of poor waste rock management. All these sites remain un-rehabilitated.

The bottom line is that the current regulation of mine rehabilitation in Queensland doesn't work. This means that current taxpayers and future generations will bear the cost of mine sites that are left unusable. They will hold no future economic value and will have no use, in terms of conservation, or use by the community.

There are key reforms that need to be achieved if the environment and the interests of the taxpayer are to be protected, these include;

1. Amendments to state environmental protection legislation to ensure that minimum mine rehabilitation standards are legally binding
2. A full review of the State's financial assurance system to ensure the full cost of mine rehabilitation is reflected in the level of assurance and that this assurance is lodged with the Government before mines are approved
3. Establish an independent statutory authority to enforce the legislation governing mine closure and rehabilitation and ensure it has the required capability and capacity to enforce the legislation

Please take the time to write to both Minister Miles and Minister Lynham asking for these key reforms to ensure that mine rehabilitation really does work in Queensland.

1. Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, Ch 13, p374

We need you to help keep coal in the ground



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Spinifex

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Land Clearing a grave threat to Koalas

Picture: Koala rescue, Ellen McIlroy



‘Putting the dozers back to bed’: supporting stronger tree clearing laws in Queensland

Picture: Landclearing Olive Vale, The Wilderness Society

Is it possible that Koalas could be extinct in our lifetime if we do nothing to tackle land clearing? Martin Taylor, WWF's Protected Areas and Conservation Science Manager looks at how.

It's hard to believe, but koalas could be extinct on the Koala Coast (Coast from Brisbane River to Logan River) in our lifetimes. A recent UQ analysis found koala numbers have fallen 80% since 1996. WWF teamed up with Romane Cristescu (USC) and her detection dog Maya to look for koalas around Maryborough. All the locals told us that koala numbers had collapsed there too. We searched for days in areas koalas had been seen before. We found nothing.

So then we checked with wildlife rescue groups around the state. They revealed a major upsurge in numbers of sick and injured native animals in the past three years. RSPCA reports a jump in wildlife patients from about 8,000 in 2011 to 22,000 in 2015. We asked them all...why? Why are you seeing this upsurge? The immediate reasons are dogs, cars, diseases. But the ultimate causes, they told us again and again: habitat loss, land clearing. Animal refugees are scrambling to look for new places to live when their habitat is bulldozed. As they roam they are hit by cars, attacked by dogs, stressed and sick.

Before land clearing was finally brought under control in 2004-6, Australia's top wildlife experts estimated 100 million native vertebrate deaths every year—lizards, birds, koalas, possums—along with 190 million trees. Staggering numbers!

This was at a time when 450,000 ha was being cleared a year. But since the former Newman Government “took the axe to tree clearing laws”, clearing has skyrocketed back up 300,000ha at last count, an area larger than the entire ACT. Animal deaths must once again count in the tens of millions.

Most people are rightly distressed to hear about the abandoned, injured or abused pets that RSPCA has to cope with. But this is the tip of animal welfare iceberg. Most animal suffering is hidden away in the backblocks under the tracks of bulldozers pushing down forests forwhat? Mining? CSG? Urban sprawl? Those activities are surely devastating where they occur. But where they occur is very localised. The little appreciated reality is that 90% of land clearing in Queensland is for livestock pasture. The next biggest driver is logging, miniscule in comparison (3%).

More than 200,000 hectares of Commonwealth listed threatened species habitat was bulldozed in the two years from July 2012 to July 2014, including 40,000ha of koala habitat. That's 1300 house blocks being wiped out EVERY DAY!

A further 800,000 hectares of threatened species habitat was de-protected by the Newman Government but has not yet appeared in clearing statistics. A new land clearing (SLATS) report is overdue that will look at data from 2014-15 and we dread seeing it, because we expect much worse again. Queensland land clearing is generating the equivalent of 8 million cars worth of carbon pollution, which has doubled since 2009-11. These massive impacts saw not one single attempt by a farmer to seek approval under Commonwealth law and zero compliance actions taken by the Department in Canberra.

Please join our campaign. Write to or better yet meet with your state MP and let them know you support a return to strong effective land clearing controls to stop the imminent extinction of the koala in Qld and the worsening risk of loss of many of our unique Queensland wild animals and plants.

Dr Tim Seelig is the Wilderness Society's Queensland Campaigns Manager, and has been spearheading the campaign for stronger land clearing laws in Queensland.

The clearing of native trees and woodlands is the biggest direct threat to biodiversity and the habitats of native wildlife in Queensland. Land clearing also impacts on land degradation, hydrology, soil erosion and indeed farmland productivity. The future of the Great Barrier Reef is in part tied to how Queensland deals with its land clearing, both directly from run off and indirectly from climate change, which in turn threatens biodiversity more broadly. The flipside of this is that addressing land clearing can help arrest threats to nature, and substantial carbon emission reductions can be achieved in Queensland through controls on land clearing.

As we know, the Newman LNP Government in Queensland weakened the state's land clearing laws, which were far from perfect but which had progressively reduced the clearing of native woodlands, and reduced associated releases of carbon from trees being destroyed. Under Newman, clearing rates soared and we witnessed the return of the bulldozers and chains. This became a campaign issue in the 2015 Queensland election, and conservation groups secured public and written commitments from Labor to strengthen the laws again.

It has taken longer than we expected, and proved harder than it should have been, but we finally have a reform Bill in Parliament: the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislative Amendment Bill 2016. This is the product of a sustained campaign by conservation groups, and supportive MPs within the government. The introduction of this Bill is an important milestone - a critical first step achieving reform - but it is the only the start of a Parliamentary process and a community-focused campaign to see it passed. With a ferocious reaction to change from the agricultural lobby and LNP in full swing, and a hung Parliament where support from all three Independent MPs is necessary, we will need to work very hard to get the Bill put into law.

The Bill itself has been referred to the Agricultural and Environment Committee of Parliament, and a report from its Inquiry is due by 30 June. A large number of submissions were sent in in support of the Bill, reflecting a fantastic effort from the conservation sector, and also a number opposing the reforms. The strong message from submissions is that the case for land clearing law reform is strong on a number

of fronts (biodiversity, landscape ecology, Reef, climate, and rural sustainability).

However, the Parliamentary Inquiry is just part of the ongoing campaign to secure stronger controls on land clearing: both ensuring support for the Bill, and creating the space for a more comprehensive conversation in Queensland about reducing clearing and supporting carbon farming which can benefit us all, including landholders and farmers, and nature.

Meeting with your local MP is an important and direct way you can highlight the issues and apply pressure on our Parliamentarians. No matter which party or alignment they are from, each of our elected representatives needs to hear from the community about support for the Bill, and for land clearing and land carbon abatement issues to be addressed.

Trees must be seen as being more valuable standing up than being knocked down. The land clearing reform Bill is expected to be voted on in August. Let's hope it is passed, maybe even strengthened, to support our future ecological, social and economic prosperity.

A reflection on reef protection: One year into a new government – how are we fairing in protecting the Reef?

Revel Pointon, Solicitor at EDO QLD reflects on what the Government has done to protect the reef and what more is needed to ensure its survival.

After 3 years of weakening of our state environmental laws, many gave a relieved sigh when the current government was voted into power in 2015 on a platform of environmental protection and, particularly, commitments to protect our Great Barrier Reef. The Queensland Government policy platform 'Saving the Great Barrier Reef – Labor's plan to protect a natural wonder', was enshrined in the joint Commonwealth and Queensland Government Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (together – 'Reef commitments'). With 93 per cent of our Reef currently showing signs of bleaching, the concern of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) which drove this policy focus was not misplaced. So, one year into taking office, how is the government fairing in improving protections for our Reef?

Climate change

Given that climate change is the key cause of the decline of our Reef, the scarce number of Reef commitments related to addressing climate change is surprising. The key Reef commitment to address climate change was to 'reduce Queensland's carbon emissions by reintroducing Labor's nation-leading tree clearing laws'. In March 2016 the government finally introduced legislation intended to provide for this commitment, the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This Bill includes stronger protections of riparian vegetation along Reef catchments, however

serious reforms are also needed to tighten the self-assessment codes to protect wildlife and to address climate change, as intended.

The release of a Queensland Government discussion paper to assist in the development of a Queensland climate action plan provides a glimmer of hope that our government will be taking stronger action to address climate change, in the future; submissions are due 5 August 2016.

Port impacts

Law reforms promised in the government's Reef commitments were more focused on building the Reef's resilience to survive impacts. The key successful Reef law reform undertaken by the Queensland Government to date has been the passing of the Sustainable Ports Development Act 2015 (Qld) (SPD Act), which seeks to reduce port development along the Reef coastline and limit offshore dumping of dredge material. A draft maintenance dredging strategy was also recently released, however disappointingly the draft strategy does little to attempt to truly address the environmental impacts of maintenance dredging, as was its purpose.

We are, unfortunately, still awaiting fulfilment of commitments to limit impacts from non-port related dredging and dumping, such as that from marinas¹. We are also awaiting fulfilment of the commitment to 'prohibit transshipping operations within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.'

Water quality

Unlike the previous government, Minister Miles has stated that he is open to utilising the Reef specific enforcement powers where farmers are not complying with minimum industry standards; however we are yet to learn of any enforcement action being undertaken by the government. The final report of the government's Reef Water Science Taskforce, intended to provide a strategy for improving Reef water quality, is due in May and will hopefully lead to strong government actions.

More to be done

Further Reef law reform commitments we are hoping to see fulfilled in the coming year include the reinstatement of strong coastal planning laws, the full repealing of the Newman Government's 'water laws', and the development of a 'net benefit policy' to deliver an overall improvement to the Reef's ecosystem health and values.

We appreciate that the government faces difficulties as a minority government, however we, along with the ecosystems and industries dependent on our Reef's survival, expect that the government will continue to push for the laws that are required when our Reef is fading before our eyes.

For more information see www.edoqld.org.au

1. Marinas can involve large amounts of capital dredging. For example, Shute Harbour marine proposed near Airlie Beach proposes to cover 17 hectares and require up to 500,000m³ of capital dredging.

Coral bleaching and our Great Barrier Reef

Prof. Ove Hoegh-Guldberg and Dr Tyrone Ridgway are coral reefs experts at the Global Change Institute, The University of Queensland, they outline here the devastation of what happened to our Great Barrier Reef over the summer of 2016.

"The Great Barrier Reef is in grave danger. The twin perils brought by climate change – an increase in temperature of the ocean and in its acidity – threaten its very existence." – Sir David Attenborough.

You would have had to have been living under a rock to not be aware that ~93% of our much-cherished Great Barrier Reef has been a victim of a coral bleaching event caused by an underwater heatwave – with estimates that up to 50% of corals may die as a result.

The sad thing about this is that scientists have been warning about it for decades. In 1998, the warmest year on record at the time, the world lost around 16% of its coral reefs in the first global-scale mass coral bleaching event. Prior to the current bleaching, the mass bleaching on the Reef was recorded in 1998 and 2002 (~5-10% coral mortality in both years).

Scientific research has shown that it only takes a temperature increase of 1-2°C to disrupt the special relationship between corals and tiny marine algae that live inside their tissue, resulting in a sudden change in colour, from brown to brilliant white (bleached). These algae supply 90% of the energy that corals require for growth and reproduction. When corals bleach, they expel the algae. If conditions stay warm for a long time, corals start to die either directly or indirectly from starvation and disease.

While rising sea temperatures are the primary cause of mass coral bleaching, strong El Niños are adding to the problem and are pushing corals to their thermal tolerance limits. As CO₂ concentrations increase, sea temperatures will continue to rise – increasing the likelihood that mass coral bleaching events will become more frequent.

Coral bleaching, however, is not the only consequence of warming sea temperatures and tropical cyclones are also predicted to increase in intensity. Since 2005 there have been eight cyclones on the Reef of category 3 or above – more than previous decades and evidence that these predictions are already coming true and form part of our current reality. The climate is changing and coral reefs are on the front line.

Fortunately, all is not lost but we will need very deep and significant action to occur within three to five years or face a collapse of ecosystems like the Great Barrier Reef. The following three steps can go a long way to giving our Reef a fighting chance into the future:

- **Mitigate:** we need to keep average global surface temperature to below 2.0°C, and hopefully 1.5°C in the long-term.
- **Invest:** we need to invest in coral, renewables, and the planet, and not in coal, emissions and ecosystem collapse.
- **Strengthen:** we need an urgent and concerted effort to reduce other non-climate stresses to build the resilience of the Reef in order to help our Reef withstand the impacts of climate change over the coming years.

It is therefore imperative that the political leaders of Queensland, Australia and indeed the entire world take strong, immediate, and decisive action on climate change in order to ensure that the natural wonder that is the Reef continues to inspire, employ, educate, and generate income for generations to come.

After all, in the words of Sir David Attenborough, "Do we really care so little about the earth upon which we live that we don't wish to protect one of its greatest wonders from the consequences of our behaviours?"

Ideas for Australia:

Let's retire the idea that Australia 'depends' on digging up coal and other resources

John Quiggen, Professor at the University of Queensland, and a member of the Board of the Climate Change Authority of the Australian Government explains why we need start changing our mindset away from coal.

Here's a question that, in one form or another, has been asked repeatedly over the years: how long can Australia carry on its reliance on coal, gas and resources, in the face of looming economic and environmental pressures?

The problem has become increasingly acute with the sharp decline in world prices for fossil fuels particularly coal. Coal is, on some measures, one of Australia's biggest industries. But many analysts warn that it is facing a permanent structural decline, with a zero-carbon world economy as the end point.

So, the question posed above, while it applies to almost any major mineral commodity, is of most relevance to the decline of coal, because it is already well under way.

The wrong question

Unfortunately, the question is almost impossible to answer because it is badly posed. The problem is with the idea that Australia is a coherent economic entity that can be said to "rely" on particular commodities.

In economic terms, Australia is not like a household in which the entire family depends on the same total income. Nor is it like a business enterprise with a total profit to be split among the shareholders.

Instead, the Australian economy is an aggregate of many households, businesses and governments. They

have vastly disparate interests and concerns. Some interests are common to all Australians, some are in conflict, and some are unrelated.

In particular, some Australian households and businesses rely on coal, but most do not. In fact, as I will argue below, large groups of Australians are likely to benefit from the decline of the coal industry. This calls into question the amount of political capital that ministers are willing to spend on propping it up.

A dominant player?

First, though, let's address the perception that coal plays a dominant role in the Australian economy. That's not true in terms of jobs. According to the industry's Little Black Rock website, set up to push the benefits of coal, coal mining directly employs 41,000 people. That's about 0.4% of the nation's workforce.

Even factoring in "supporting" jobs (a way of making almost any industry look bigger) only raises the total to 111,000, or 1.5% of the workforce. The industry's claimed wage and salary payments of A\$6 billion a year are more impressive. This reflects the prevalence of high-wage, full-time jobs in the mining sector, but overall it's still less than 5% of Australia's total earnings.

To the extent that Australians in general share in the benefits of mining, it is through the industry's payments of company tax and royalties to Australian

governments. On this score, the Little Black Rock website, citing various state budgets in support of its claim, states that "over the four years 2015-16 to 2018-19, total coal royalties are projected to sum to A\$15 billion".

That's about A\$4 billion a year, or less than 1% of total taxation revenue. Given the fiscal difficulties of Australian governments, every little bit helps, but this is small beer.

Limited exposure

Moreover, most of the impact has already been absorbed. A recent study shows that the cost to the Australian government budget of a cessation of future thermal coal projects would be only A\$290 million over four years.

How can it be that our second-largest export industry (after iron ore) has such a small impact on the welfare of the average Australian?

The answer is that mining is a highly capital-intensive business, as are the associated supporting industries like rail and ports. Much of the capital is imported, with finance provided by global banks and by export finance agencies such as the US Export-Import Bank. Equity capital (investments in company stock, rather than loan finance) also mainly comes from overseas; the Reserve Bank of Australia puts the figure at up to 80%.

Mining is, in effect, an "enclave activity" (to borrow a concept from former unionist Howard Guille) – it happens here, but most of the costs and benefits accrue to foreign investors rather than the host economy.

As a result, the vast majority of export earnings from coal and other minerals flow to the owners of capital, either as interest and debt repayments or as returns on equity. Even the proportion that stays within Australia is not spread evenly: a handful of wealthy individuals account for most of the direct ownership, while Australians in general hold interests mainly through superannuation funds.

Busted boom

For all of these reasons, most Australians saw very little benefit from the mining boom. Wage growth barely outpaced inflation. While unemployment remained relatively low, this was a reflection of successful macroeconomic management by the Reserve Bank rather than of a jobs boom in the mining sector.

The flip side of this is that, now that the boom is becoming a slump, the effect on the average Australian has been quite modest.

Moreover, as mentioned above, many Australians will actually benefit from the decline of coal.

Two groups are particularly relevant.

The first is the renewable energy sector, previously hobbled by the investor uncertainty engendered by the Abbott-Turnbull government. But in the long run, employment in renewables is likely to exceed coal-mining jobs, as has already happened in the United States.

Second, export industries other than mining suffered from high exchange rates driven by the mining boom. As the exchange rate has depreciated, these exporters have gained. Examples include wine and services such as education and tourism.

Change the mining mindset

Overlaying all of this is the fact that the Australian economy, like all modern economies, is dominated by the provision of services rather than the production of physical goods.

The idea that Australia as a whole "relies" on commodity exports is a relic of the industrial economy of the middle of last century. Facing the future will mean focusing on education and on future-orientated research and innovation, rather than on extractive industries.

In this respect, the Turnbull government has made all the right noises. Unfortunately, in terms of policy, it has gone backwards, with cuts to the Gonski schools program and research priorities focused on white elephants like coal-based diesel engines. It would be smarter to look forward than back.

This article first appeared in The Conversation on 15 April 2016.

If you're in a hole,
stop digging

Queensland – a clean energy future without coal is possible

The Queensland Government is preparing a strategy on climate change, this will be the third go in 12 years, isn't it now time for some real action to address global warming, Kirsten Macey, Climate Campaigner at the Queensland Conservation Council outlines what a climate change strategy in Queensland could look like.

The Queensland Government was elected on the promise to protect the Great Barrier and reduce carbon emissions. In May 2016, the Government released its discussion paper on Advancing Climate Action In Queensland: Making the transition to a low carbon future. This discussion paper is a good start to identify ways to reduce greenhouse pollution and transition to a clean energy future.

However, we have been here before. In 2004, the Queensland Labor Government released its Queensland Greenhouse Strategy and again in 2009 the Labor Government released its ClimateQ: toward a greener Queensland that set out steps for Queensland's transition to a lower carbon future. These strategies have all outlined the problem and identified opportunities to reduce emissions. But they haven't done enough to really tackle the problem. Then came three years of backward steps under Campbell Newman's LNP Government where progress was undone – laws to reduce land clearing were removed, references to sea level rise in planning documents were removed and references to climate change were missing.

Now, in 2016, when the world is on track to being the hottest year on record and the reef experienced record-breaking sea temperatures that caused the worst coral bleaching event in history - the time to act on global warming is now.

We know that global warming is real and the impacts are already being felt in Queensland. When we mine and burn coal for electricity, we produce greenhouse pollution that causes dangerous global warming. Queenslanders believe coal mining should be phased out to save the Great Barrier Reef. And more and more Australians want leadership on climate change. If we are to avoid the worst impacts of global warming we need to keep coal in the ground and move towards 100% renewable energy.

This requires a clear plan to support clean energy jobs, clean our air and keep coal in the ground and it's what a Queensland's Greenhouse Pollution Reduction Strategy should do. But maybe a strategy isn't enough. Maybe it's time to commit to the challenge of global warming and enact Climate Change Legislation that shows the Government is committed to reducing greenhouse pollution. A Climate Change Act should have clear targets and timelines and commit to a whole of government approach in tackling the problem that is codified in legislation.

We need to put Queensland back on a sustainable footing, grow jobs and new clean industries to protect the Queensland we know and love from the dangers of global warming. Preparing Queensland for a low carbon future requires strong leadership and a departure from the business-as-usual approach to environmental policy that has contributed to the causes of global warming. Queensland can decouple its emissions while ensuring economic growth.

QCC has outlined 6 steps for how Queensland can reduce greenhouse pollution. It will also require matching budgetary funding. See here for our submission on delivering a budget that sets us on a pathway towards clean, renewable energy that will protect the Queensland we know and love from the dangers of global warming. These 6 steps outline what is needed for Queensland to tackle our rising pollution and decouple our economy. In the absence of national leadership on climate, the Queensland Government needs to step up to act strongly and decisively to protect the Great Barrier Reef, accelerate renewable energy and stop the threat of global warming.

6 Steps to reduce greenhouse pollution in Queensland

Step 1: Commit to a target to reduce greenhouse emissions in Queensland

Step 2: Stop all new coal mine and all existing coal mine expansions

Step 3: Retire our coal-fired power stations, with the dirtiest and oldest first

Step 4: Make Queensland a leader in renewable energy

Step 5: Stop Coal Seam Gas and expansions

Step 6: Improve energy efficiency and tackle air pollution

Why young, indigenous people are saying no to fossil fuels

Larissa Baldwin is the National Co-Director of Seed, Australia's first Indigenous Youth Climate Network, she explains here how indigenous people are at the forefront of impacts from global warming as well as fossil fuel extraction.

As young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we are part of the longest continuing culture in the world and we have a responsibility to protect this country. It's not just part of our culture, it's our identity. It's part of our human rights as Indigenous peoples to be able to carry on the dreaming of our ancestors.

Our people have lived sustainably off this country for over 60 thousand years. We are considered the first scientists; the first caretakers of this country and we will continue to advocate for our land. Seed's work focuses on energy production and the just transition to renewables, because this is the greatest step towards securing a safe climate future that we can take together as a nation.

In 2015 Australia became the world's largest exporter of coal, sending more than 28 billion tonnes offshore. We are also the third biggest Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) exporter and according to the Reserve Bank of Australia, we will become the world's largest by 2018.

We know that the mining and burning of fossil fuels is by far the largest contribution we make towards climate change and in a country that continues to witness the impacts of a warming climate this is completely reckless.

The pressures placed on Aboriginal communities for fossil fuel extraction are immense. They exacerbate many social issues already faced and the impact of loss of culture and connection to country continues to have huge social and emotional ramifications.

We now find our communities in a precarious position, like so many Indigenous peoples all around the world, we are facing the brunt of climate impacts on one hand and fossil fuel extraction on the other.

Our communities deserve better, and as young people we demand better. It's our communities on the frontline who need to be at the forefront of change leading the solutions and building a society that is healthier, cleaner, and more just. One that puts people before profits.

This is why Seed are standing shoulder to shoulder with communities who are standing up and saying no. We reject the rhetoric that the only way to gain economic advantage is to sell off land to mining companies. Mining is not and never will be the solution to Indigenous disadvantage. Our people deserve better than to be offered unethical and unsustainable jobs and will no longer be held to ransom with threats compulsory acquisition.

Right now, 90% of the Northern Territory is currently under exploration license for gas. Which is to fill a proposed pipeline that would cut through Queensland to be exported, with no Environmental Impact Statement.



Since Seed's beginning we have been fighting Adani's proposal to open the Galilee Basin. If built, the Carmichael mine would be the largest in the southern hemisphere. If all of the coal in the Galilee basin was to be burned it would mean game over for our climate and places like the Great Barrier Reef, which is currently experiencing the largest bleaching event in its history.

Last year we asked our Australian banks to consider the devastating impact this project would have and to make public commitments to not funding it. They did and Adani's Carmichael coal mine seems more and more unlikely. We are committed to supporting the Wangan and Jagalingou people as they continue to reject this mine, assert their rights and protect their heritage.

It's a big fight and we need everyone including you. It's time the Australian Government got serious about climate action. We need to protect our land, communities and culture from the impacts of climate change and destructive fossil fuel projects on our country.

To show your support and take action with Seed go to www.protectcountry.org.au



How does climate change feature in this Federal Election?

Jackson Turner is the community organiser at Queensland Conservation Council and explains why global warming is such an important issue for the federal election and why people power is so important.

It seems like important issues get sidelined while politicians discuss 'growth', 'jobs' or some new 'crisis'. Yet I always find it inspiring to see everyday people step up to the challenge and campaign for the Australia they want to live in. Sometimes we fool ourselves into thinking that the fiery passion that fuels social movements has long since burnt out. However, the energy around elections shows the exact opposite. People are looking for ways to take part in social change and when asked to stand up for what they believe in they will rise to the occasion. With fossil fuel pollution continuing to rise we have never been more in need of this kind of furious passion.

Whether or not the major parties know it yet, this will be a climate election.

A recent ReachTEL survey of 2400 people commissioned by a coalition of climate groups found that:

64% would more likely to vote for a party which supported 100% renewable energy in 20 years.

56.4% said they want the government to do more on global warming.

48% said they would be more likely to vote for a party that supported reducing Australia's net carbon emissions to zero by 2050.

The data is clear: a significant number of those surveyed would vote based on climate policies. In light of the worst coral bleaching event in the history of the Great Barrier Reef and ongoing drought across Queensland the attention to global warming is not surprising. There was a strong mandate coming out of the Queensland state election to protect the reef from global warming and the latest bleaching event has left 93% of the reef damaged. It's deeply tragic but anger is a powerful motivator.

The point is that people are not disengaged, they are looking for a way they can make a difference.

Across the country groups are working together to make sure our leaders cannot get away with stalling action on global warming any longer. The Greens have committed to a policy of no new coal mines or coal seam gas and a renewable energy target of 90% by 2030. Labor has stepped up to the plate somewhat and announced a renewable energy target (RET) of 50% by 2030. They also have plans to introduce a \$355 million emissions trading scheme. The Coalition is still lagging behind the pack with a 28% by 2030 RET and their Direct Action policy which analysts say is nowhere near enough to keep us below 1.5°C of warming.

QCC is calling on all major political parties to develop ambitious national policies to protect our environment, reduce greenhouse pollution and support 100% renewable energy. We need a national plan to limit dangerous global warming to well below 1.5°C above preindustrial levels and build a cleaner, safer, better future for our children. QCC is seeking commitments from all political parties to announce comprehensive policies in the following areas:

1. Adopt a national greenhouse gas reduction target consistent with staying below 1.5°C
2. 100% renewable energy by 2035
3. No new coal mines or expansion of existing mines
4. A national plan to phase out all coal-fired power plants, with the oldest and dirtiest first
5. End fossil fuel subsidies

However, if we want to have a safe climate and save the reef from future bleaching this election can't just be about voting for a party. If we are going to build the support we need to take real action then we are going to have think beyond simple party politics. We need to build power for the long term so that whoever Australia elects, we can hold them to account.

There are groups active across the country which anyone can get involved with. We encourage our supporters to stand up and make their voices heard. Many of our member groups will be active during this period as well. Get involved and vote for action to stop global warming!

What is divestment is all about

James Baird, Chairperson of the Ethical Advisers Co-Op and Adviser at JustInvest explains what divestment is.

Divestment is the opposite of investment - it simply means selling unwanted investments from your financial portfolio. it's a term often used when describing an investor's action to sell a stock they find unethical or morally ambiguous.

Numerous divestment campaigns are currently taking place around the globe, many regarding investments in fossil fuels (whether direct or indirect operations). When looking at recent divestment of fossil fuels by a wide range of investors, there are often a number of reasons cited for the decision - and it's not just the impact of divestment campaigns and investor activism.

However, divestment isn't just about Fossil Fuels. It is relevant to a variety of social, cultural and economic issues. In recent months, a number of super funds divested from Transfield Services, the company that operates the federal government's detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru. The funds cited evidence of human rights violations inside the offshore detention centres run by the company. The decisions suggested that the risks associated with the company were too high.

In addition to ethical considerations, there's research that suggests fossil fuels may not be a good long term investment. Mercer is one Asset Consultant that has warned investors against portfolios based on fossil fuel investments, and recommends that portfolio managers factor climate change impacts into risk modelling - a seismic shift in investment

behaviour for many. Other concerns include the issue of risk, for example regulatory risk around climate change. Also, the idea of the decreasing value of 'stranded assets' as well as competition from innovation in renewable energy are often cited.

In May 2015, the Church of England confirmed their divestment from Tar Sands Oil and Thermal Coal. The decision applies to the Church's £6 billion portfolio. This isn't a new concept - for generations, religious investors whose traditions embrace peace and nonviolence have avoided investing in enterprises that profit from products designed to harm fellow human beings or the environment. In the mid-1700s, the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, gave a sermon titled "The Use of Money", which outlined his basic tenets of social investing (for example, not to harm your neighbour through your business practices). Some of the most well known applications of ethical investing were religiously motivated, with investors often avoiding companies involved in production of alcohol, tobacco, pornography and armaments.

However, divestment is only half the story! When investing according to their ethics, our clients are now looking beyond the negatives, and focusing on the positives, i.e. exploring sectors for reinvestment. Those investors want to understand how the long-term outperformance has been achieved in ethical portfolios. To quote Joe Keefe, President and CEO of Pax World Management:

"The premise underlying sustainable investing is elegant in its simplicity: companies that do a better job of integrating environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards into their business models are better positioned than their less-enlightened competitors to provide investment performance over the long term."

This article first appeared in <http://www.ethicalinvestmentweek.com/>

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Shorebirds at risk from the Colton Coal mine

Picture Eastern Curlew, Rob Parker and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, John Barkla, Birdlife Australia

Sheena Gillman, co-chair of Conservation BirdLife Southern Queensland, talks about how the Colton coal mine north of Maryborough will impact shorebirds on the Mary River Estuary.

BirdLife Southern Queensland (BSQ) strongly advocates for the protection of shorebird roosts and feeding sites. Amazingly as we head for a federal election the environment barely rates a mention. Of great concern to BirdLife members is the reality that a further 14 species of birds were added to the national threatened species list taking the total listed to 133. One group in particular is in dire straits – migratory shorebirds. Key Biodiversity Areas are internationally recognized sites for the conservation of nature. In Australia, 315 key biodiversity areas have been identified by BirdLife Australia scientists and volunteers. Of these, only 20% are fully protected.

The Mary River estuary flows to the Great Sandy Straits RAMSAR site which compels Australian governments to do everything in their power, to protect the area acknowledged as important for migratory species. What is not acceptable is the establishment of the Colton coal mine: a greenfield coal mine which has a clear intention to discharge untreated mining effluent in to the Mary River, where it will 'be blended' so enabling criteria for discharge of contaminated water to be met.

Of concern, is the position taken by the Queensland DEHP in allowing an Environmental Authority (EA) in preference to an Environmental Impact Statement for this coastal ecological community. Further information is provided indicating that the site process water would be unsuitable for irrigation and stock water. Colton Coal initially proposed to manage discharge of the excess water through a pipeline to Saltwater Creek. We now understand that the pipeline will deposit directly in to the Mary River – with the Susan River estuary lying north east of the Mary River, this area is a referable wetland. An estimated 730ML per annum of surplus water is expected to be generated. This will flow into prescribed high environmental value waters, including sites known to provide critical habitat for feeding shorebirds.

Long term data collected by the Queensland Wader Study Group, demonstrates that the Great Sandy Straits Ramsar site is an important feeding site of the EPBC-listed critically endangered Far Eastern Curlew, Great Knot, and Curlew Sandpiper, and the endangered Bar-tailed Godwit. Plans to discharge waste water into this valuable estuarine system without

appropriate research to measure the negative impacts on the benthic system, is untenable and an unacceptable risk.

Due to the steep population decline of Australia's migratory shorebirds, particularly in relation to the loss of feeding grounds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, every feeding site is an essential stepping stone for their survival. The birds arrive in Queensland exhausted and must rest and feed to successfully return to their breeding grounds each year.

These small industrial developments occurring under an 'EA' process, are simply death by a thousand cuts. Their cumulative impacts remain unquantified, and we urge the Queensland Government to comply with clear legislative requirements to prevent developments that will contribute to the ongoing decline of our shorebirds.

Please take time to register support for our bird life at:
<http://www.birdsyoulove.org>



Community Energy - Queensland Communities powering up for themselves?

Energetic Communities is a key driver of the community energy movement in Queensland. Luke Reade, President of Energetic Communities talks about how communities are powering up for themselves.

Communities are taking control of their energy. It's the new buzz phrase - **Community Owned Renewable Energy (CORE)**!

CORE is where the community itself raises funds, thereby providing up front capital for renewable energy installations (be it solar, wind, biodigesters or storage) on the roofs, paddocks or storage sheds of nearby businesses, not-for-profits or the local council. The host site then refinances the loan or pays for electricity through often cheaper electricity bills. The community investors get a return on investment of around 7 percent, so profits stay in the community! CORE allows renters and others without the appropriate roof to access to the renewable energy transition. The communities are more engaged in where their energy comes from and it's happening on sports clubs, schools, dairy farms, waste facilities, health care facilities, churches, breweries, aboriginal communities, as well as Local Government sites.

The site owner/host site is not wasting money, not contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, while also adding a community benefit. Under some models of CORE, the building owner is 'gifted' the installation after 5 to 10 years. Repower Shoalhaven for example, have installed a 100kW solar system on a bowls club, as well as churches, a bakery and a dairy.

Keith Anderson, a dairy farmer from Nowra, NSW, is looking forward to savings of \$8000 from a 30kW community funded solar installation on his roof.

Most of these projects are occurring in NSW and Victoria, and other states are not far behind. There are 72 community energy groups throughout Australia. Sunshine Coast Community Solar is likely to be one of the first in Queensland, along with Energetic Communities in Brisbane, who see the opportunity for Queensland communities looking for what's next as we transition towards 100% renewable energy.

Queensland communities looking at community energy include Repower Scenic Rim, Samford Futures, Southern Downs Community Solar and Cairns. There is even a community owned retailer in NSW, ENOVA, offering a model for retailers supporting community energy projects.

One of the best things about this growing sector is the willingness of groups to share their experience and documentation. We're part of the sharing economy and want to see communities doing it for themselves. We're also finding that when the word goes out that another investment opportunity is ready; enough investors sign up in hours to days.



Community Owned Renewable Energy (CORE) is now in every slightly progressive energy policy from local to federal levels of government. Not surprising, as 63% of Australians are likely to vote for parties supporting renewable energy. In fact, every dollar of government money spent supporting community energy can leverage up to \$17 of community investment. The Queensland Government is talking about it as part of the 50% Renewable Energy Target, Federal Labor has committed \$98 million to it and the Greens have had a Community Energy policy for a few years. Imagine how your community could benefit from driving community energy, not to mention the local economic benefit and jobs this could provide in a Just Transition.

For more information check out
www.energeticcommunities.org.au
donate

Our story

In 1969 a small group of people got together to share ideas. They were bushwalkers, divers, nature lovers and geologists who shared a growing concern that the things which made Queensland unique were being lost. More than forty years later the ground they founded is Queensland's leading voice for environmental protection.

What we do

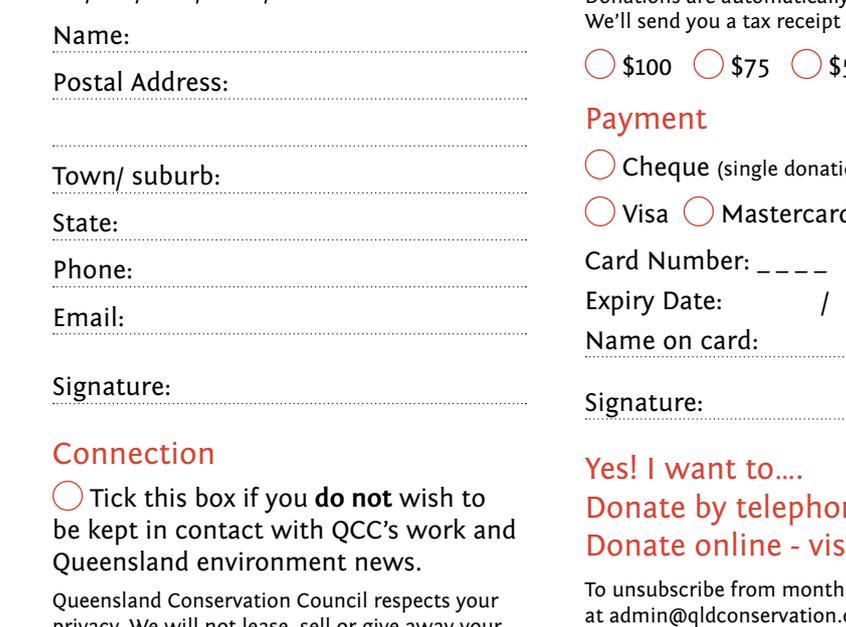
We are the representative voice for environment and community groups and their supporters in Queensland. Working with over 60 member groups we engage with government, business and the community to achieve better environmental outcomes for the State.

We are also a strong environmental campaigning organisation. We campaign to protect Queensland's natural environment and keep coal in the ground.

QCC has been campaigning on keeping coal in the ground, advocating for 100% renewable energy, getting strong laws on land clearing, protecting our water and rivers, protecting our Great Barrier Reef, campaigning for strong air pollution controls and monitoring and ensuring the environment is part of new planning laws.

Support US!

But we need your help - your support means QCC can continue to take action to protect the Queensland we know and love.



Donate to QCC
and protect our
environment

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