

No coal mining in our Painted Desert

**Our natural
masterpiece
should not be
scarred by
coal mining**



Image: Peter Owen

Image: Anna Uciechowska CC BY-SA

The spectacular Painted Desert of South Australia is a national treasure, an artist's dream come to life in nature.

Yet this stunning landscape, and the Australian Outback's most important water resource – the Great Artesian Basin – are threatened by one of the most destructive mining projects planned for this country.

Life to the desert

The Great Artesian Basin is one of the largest underground water reservoirs in the world, in one of the driest places on Earth.

Coming to the surface in natural mound springs, for thousands of years it has brought life to the desert. Across much of inland Australia people and wildlife alike continue to rely on it as a rare source of permanent water.

The stunning landscape of the Painted Desert lies above the Great Artesian Basin in South Australia.

Its ancient weathered rock hills burst out of the surrounding flatlands of the state's 'breakaway country' in a kaleidoscopic array of pastel colours.

Due to isolation, the Painted Desert and the mound springs are home to unique plants and animals found nowhere else on the planet.



An aerial photograph of a winding river in a desert landscape. The river is a vibrant blue-green color, contrasting sharply with the arid, brownish-yellow terrain. The river flows from the top left towards the bottom right, with several smaller tributaries branching off. The surrounding land is sparsely vegetated with low-lying shrubs and grasses. The overall scene is one of a stark, dry environment.

Fossil fuel company Altona Energy wants to dig a 20 square kilometre open-pit coal mine right through the Painted Desert and down into the Great Artesian Basin.

This massive project would produce high levels of greenhouse gas pollution, dump hundreds of **millions of tonnes of coal mining wastes** on the Painted Desert, and create **millions of litres of 'black water' waste every day.**

Mining water in the desert

The coal Altona Energy want is in the Arckaringa Basin directly below the Great Artesian Basin. They plan to drain and 'de-water' this water reserve, **pumping on average over 300 million litres from this important aquifer every day throughout 30 years of mining.**

In the driest state in the driest continent, we can not allow such an unprecedented water grab that would damage outback bores for a century and threaten the endangered natural mound springs.

A carbon bomb

Opening up coal mining in the Painted Desert will also create a massive carbon bomb for Australia. Exploiting yet more fossil fuels will further push us towards dangerous climate change.

This is only the beginning - Altona Energy plan to expand to several coal mines and a coal gas fired power station on-site, opening up the Painted Desert to the impacts of fossil fuel industrialisation.

Our iconic wild places, the value of water in our outback, and a safe climate future are all too important to be threatened by short-term destructive coal mining.

Together, we can protect our Painted Desert.



What you can do

You can help protect the Painted Desert and the Great Artesian Basin:

1) Contact the South Australian Campaign Centre to find out more about the campaign and how you can help: 08 8231 6586; sa@wilderness.org.au

2) Talk to your local member of Parliament and ask them to champion the protection of the Painted Desert.

3) Join the Facebook Group: The Wilderness Society South Australia to keep up to date with local campaign actions and events

4) Become a campaign champion – volunteer