



Fossil Fool Bulletin

Fossil fools in the spotlight this week: A resource for people working to end the fossil fuel era in Australia

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NSW govt coal plan likely to fail

By Simon Nicholas, IEEFA

The NSW government's new strategic statement on coal exploration and mining has been unveiled, just as Covid-19 accelerates the energy transition away from fossil fuels. The statement optimistically maintains that global demand for thermal coal will only drop by one-tenth by 2050.

Furthermore, the government is expecting that Australian thermal coal exports will be protected from falling shipments to Japan, China and South Korea by rising demand from India.

This view contrasts strongly with that of India's Central Electricity Authority and the Indian government. The CEA projects that renewable energy will make up 51 per cent of total generation capacity by 2030, by which time coal-fired power will have reduced to 33 per cent.

And the Indian government clearly wants that fuelled by domestic coal, not imported.

Significantly reduced demand for coal amid the Covid-19 economic downturn has mobilised the Indian government to step up its efforts to reduce dependence on thermal coal imports.

Adani exposed to drop in demand

This move to protect Indian coal mining workers has apparently come straight from the top – Prime Minister Narendra Modi – and does not appear to bode well for the future of Adani's Carmichael mine here in Australia.

State-owned Coal India, the world's largest coal miner, has been mandated by the government to replace at least 100 million tonnes of coal imports in fiscal year 2020-21.



Coal ships in the port of Newcastle, from which most NSW coal is exported.
Photo: TiN News

India has tried this before, but this time may well be different. As is happening globally, power demand in India has declined dramatically since the start of its Covid-19 lockdown and this drop has been worn by its coal-fired power stations. India is not a major destination for NSW thermal coal and it's starting to look increasingly likely that it never will be.

And it's not only nations that are beginning to turn away from seaborne thermal coal. In an unfortunate piece of timing for the NSW government, the unveiling of its statement on coal came the day after it was reported that major miner BHP has hired investment bank JP Morgan to sell its last Australian thermal coal mine in the Hunter Valley.

BHP doesn't seem to see much of a future for thermal coal amid growing pressure on fossil fuel exposure from shareholders and regulators. Other

major global mining companies are making their move. Anglo American has said it wants to divest its thermal coal mines in South Africa while South32 is in the process of selling its mines. Rio Tinto has already exited all coal mining already.

Covid-19 now appears to be accelerating the rate at which some companies transition from fossil fuels including coal. This has been evidenced most starkly by oil and gas producer BP's decision to write off \$US17.5bn (\$25.5 billion) of assets on the assumption that Covid-19 will accelerate the shift away from fossil fuels.

Similarly, Italy's Enel – one of the largest operators of coal-fired power plants in Europe – is planning to accelerate the closure of its coal-generation assets in the expectation that the worsening economics of coal power will persist beyond the pandemic.

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• P3: Clive Palmer mine challenged in court

P4: Company betrays own coal policy

NSW coal plan may fail

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Companies that mine and consume coal are also having increasing difficulty caused by a reluctance by banks and insurers to finance the industry. Recent additions to the list of financiers leaving thermal coal behind include major Japanese banks such as Mizuho and Sumitomo-Mitsui. Japan is Australia's largest thermal coal export destination and the moves by its major banks should come as a warning sign to Australian governments and coal exporters.

Korea moving to renewables

Meanwhile, in May the South Korean government unveiled a US\$62 billion 'New Deal' designed to refocus its post-coronavirus economy. The plan is based on two pillars – a 'Digital New Deal' and a 'Green New Deal' with the latter intended to move the nation away from coal-fired power and towards renewable energy.

South Korea was Australia's third-largest thermal coal export destination in 2019 and its approach to post-coronavirus economic recovery is in stark contrast to the NSW government's attitude that the coal industry will have a key role in any economic bounce-back after the pandemic.

The strategic statement on coal comes only one day after it was revealed that NSW's first renewable energy zone has received a "phenomenal" response, attracting registrations of interest for 27 gigawatts of proposals valued at \$A38 billion.

If that wasn't enough to make the direction of global power markets clear, the NSW government doesn't have to look much further afield. Last week the South Australian government announced a new energy plan to ensure the state reaches net 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030.

Covid-19 isn't slowing the energy technology transition away from fossil fuels – if anything it is accelerating it. Acceptance of this inevitability in Australia will lead to appropriate post-coronavirus energy investment, which will both lower power prices and support jobs. A refusal to do so, and continued focus on industries of the past, cannot provide the recovery that Australian workers are going to need.

• Simon Nicholas is an energy analyst at the Institute of Energy, Economics and Financial Analysis.



Secretive C-19 commission ignores environment groups, promotes gas

Greenpeace and five environmental and investor groups have lodged a complaint with the Prime Minister after the National Covid-19 Coordination Commission (NCCC) falsely claimed to have consulted with them when no such discussions occurred.

The groups including The Wilderness Society, the Australian Marine Conservation Society, Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility, and the Sunrise Project published an open letter calling out the false claims and urging a renewables-led economic recovery, after NCCC Chair Nev Power told a Senate committee his group had engaged with more than 1000 organisations.

"The government's secretive gas-stacked Coronavirus commission poses a real threat to the climate, economic recovery efforts and fundamental democratic principles," Greenpeace Australia Pacific Campaigner Jonathan Moylan said.

Covid Commission in grip of gas

"The Covid Commission has falsely claimed to have consulted with environmental groups and a broad range of sectors, despite being stacked with gas industry representatives, appearing to advance a gas agenda while ignoring that gas is a destructive fossil fuel that has made a massive contribution to the climate crisis.

"Greenpeace, and a range of other groups who have had no interaction with the Commission, are named on a list of organisations the commission alleges to have engaged, when no such consultation has occurred.

"Not only has the Commission not consulted widely, but its leaked interim Manufacturing Taskforce report has recommended special access for gas and petrochemical companies to lay claim to public money to prop up unviable and short-term projects, while ignoring the need to act on climate change. For all these reasons any many more Greenpeace is calling on Prime Minister Scott Morrison to abolish this conflicted and compromised commission."



NCCC chairman Nev Power.
Photo: NCCC

Consultation claims unsubstantiated

On top of its unsubstantiated consultation claims, the Commission has no representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and businesses, virtually no representation from sectors most impacted by Covid-19, such as tourism, hospitality and the arts, and is weighted to sectors that will fuel climate change and are unlikely to drive the necessary economic activity due to their capital-intensive nature.

Earlier this month, members of the commission appeared before a Senate hearing where NCCC Chairman and gas company executive Nev Power revealed that his commission did not consider options other than gas to spur manufacturing and the NCCC has not undertaken any kind of cost-benefit analysis to support its decisions to advocate for certain projects.

More evidence of the murky relationship between private interests and the Commission was revealed when Power confirmed reports that his personal executive assistant, previously his secretary at Strike Energy, is being paid for by taxpayers and the payments are being made through his private trust. Furthermore, Power is not required to disclose or keep receipts for how he spends his more than \$260,000 taxpayer-funded allowance.



First day in court in historic challenge to Clive Palmer's Galilee Coal Project

From the EDO

Young Queenslanders and rural landholders, represented by the EDO, have appeared in Queensland's Land Court for the first time in their landmark legal case against Clive Palmer's Galilee Coal Project.

This is the first time a coal mine has been challenged on human rights grounds in Australia and the first climate change case by young people in Australia.

Hearing set for May 2021

The directions hearing outlined the next steps in the case and set the final date for the hearing as May 2021.

Youth Verdict, a coalition of diverse young Queenslanders, will argue the Galilee Coal Project would cause a breach of their human rights by fuelling dangerous climate change that puts their futures, their lives and their cultures at risk.

They join The Bimblebox Alliance Inc., a group of landholders and conservationists who first objected to the mine in December 2019, arguing it would destroy the pristine woodland of the Bimblebox Nature Refuge and its inhabitants and be lost for future generations.

"The Bimblebox Alliance has objected to this coal mine because it will destroy a protected area – the Bimblebox Nature Refuge. Today's hearing marks 12 years since Waratah Coal first applied to develop this mine," said Sheena Gillman, spokesperson for The Bimblebox Alliance.

Biodiversity hot spot needs protection

"The Bimblebox Nature Refuge is a sanctuary to thousands of animals and home to the iconic Rufus Betong.



EDO Paralegal and law student Bri Collins with Brisbane Principal Lawyer Sean Ryan visit the Bimblebox Nature Refuge. Photo: EDO

The 300-year-old trees, heathland and wetlands that make up Bimblebox cannot be offset or replaced. Bimblebox is largely uncleared and in its natural state, it is a hotspot of biodiversity and must be protected.

"The Bimblebox Nature Refuge was created through contract in perpetuity and it's disgraceful that the Queensland Government can just sign this away. We will fight this proposed development because it is totally inappropriate land-use to destroy this nature refuge for a coal mine."

Youth Verdict co-founder Mel McAuliffe said, "Last month we launched our historic legal case against Clive Palmer's Waratah Coal Project. Today is a step forward in our fight to protect our human rights from the worsening impacts of climate change.

"Youth Verdict members come from all around Queensland and many have experienced climate-fuelled droughts, floods, bushfires, storms. I grew up on a cattle station in Central Queensland during the Millennium drought. That experience motivates me to fight for the safe future my generation deserves."

Sean Ryan, Principal Solicitor at EDO, said, "This is a significant case because it is the first in Australia to challenge a coal mine on human rights grounds.

"Today is an important first step in this landmark case, the first day in court for our clients as they challenge Clive Palmer's Galilee Coal Project. Our clients are among dozens of parties objecting to the Galilee Coal Project."

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Independent news and insight into energy, industry and climate in Western Australia from Peter Milne

<https://www.boilingcold.com.au/>



CLEARING THE PR POLLUTION THAT CLOUDS CLIMATE SCIENCE

<https://www.desmogblog.com/>



A resource for people working to end the fossil fuel era in Australia

<https://www.fossilfool.com.au/>

Liberty Mutual betrays own coal policy

Pressure is mounting on one of the world's largest insurers, Liberty Mutual, to abandon plans for a new coal mine in Central Queensland after it cited its own environmental policies for a decision to cut ties with the Adani Carmichael project.

Liberty Mutual is the sole ultimate owner of the Mount Ramsay Coal Company, which plans to build the Baralaba South greenfield coal mine south west of Rockhampton.

That's despite a 2019 policy stating Liberty Mutual is committed to make no new investments in debt or equity securities of companies that generate more than 25% of their revenues from thermal coal mining.

It's also despite media reports in which Liberty Mutual says it will take the policy one step further and make no additional direct investment in the coal industry whatsoever.

In addition, there is massive community opposition to the Baralaba South coal mine, with nearby residents and farmers fiercely opposed to the project due to concerns around flood risk, air pollution, and land degradation.

Paul Stephenson, who was born and raised in Moura and is part of a fourth-generation farming family labelled Liberty Mutual "hypocritical".

"Liberty Mutual has said it will make no new investments in the coal industry. It has also said, at the same time, that it will proceed with the Baralaba South coal mine, which would cost hundreds of millions of dollars to build," he said.

"The company can't have it both ways.

"It's time for Liberty Mutual to come clean and be honest.

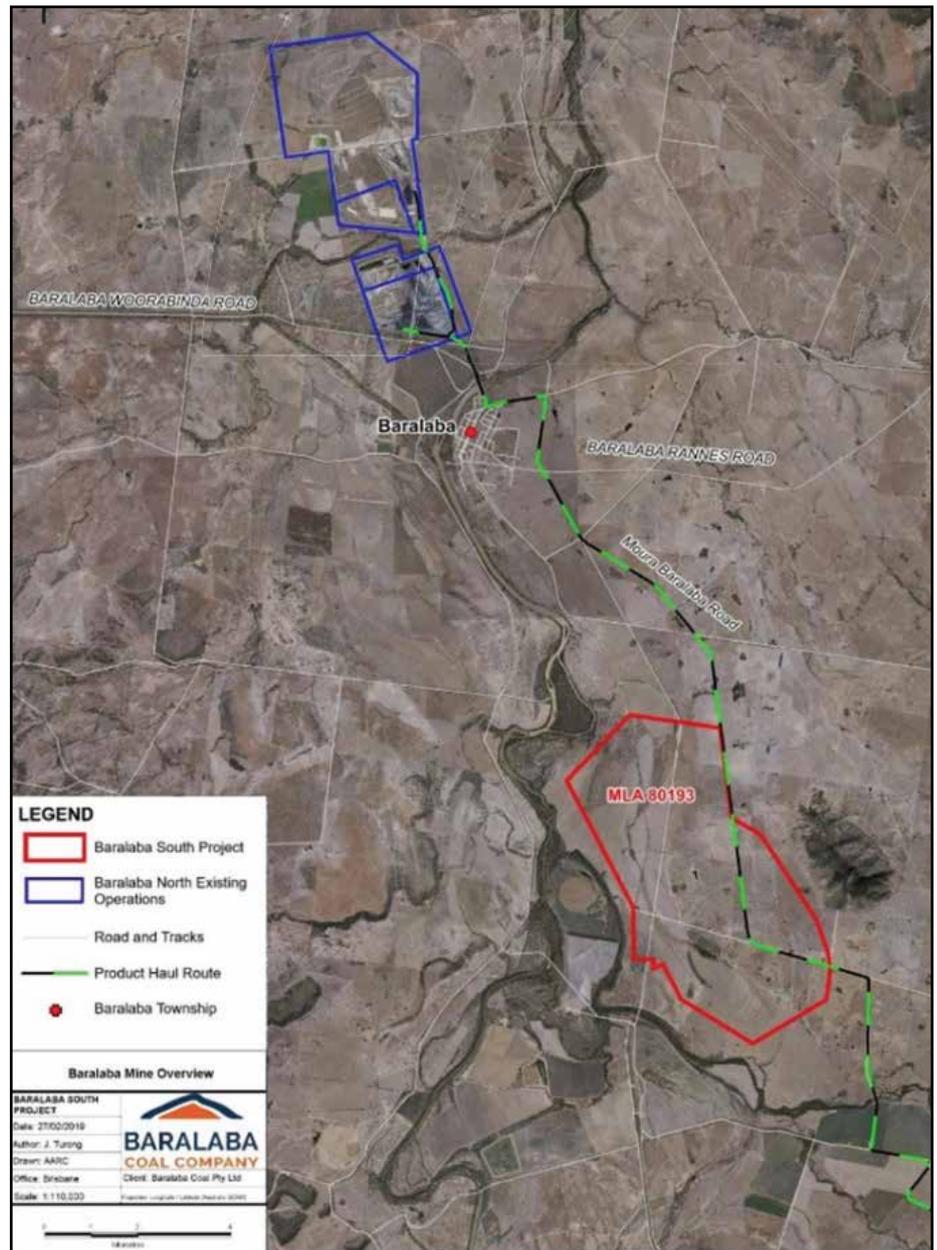
"Liberty Mutual must withdraw the Baralaba South project."

Baralaba grazier Brett Coombe said, "We're opposed to this mine because it will be built on a floodplain next to a river on prime agricultural land.

Threat to water and reef

"It will threaten the quality of the water supply for Baralaba and all systems downstream including the Great Barrier Reef.

"The company also wants to put up a levy bank that will flood country that has never flooded before.



"For a mine that has a limited lifespan, it should not be allowed to create long term damage as is proposed."

Lock the Gate Alliance Queensland spokesperson Ellie Smith said Liberty Mutual's conflicting attitude to the Adani coal mine and Baralaba South coal mine was typical of large corporations.

Company greenwashes image

"This company clearly wants to greenwash its image by withdrawing from the Adani Carmichael coal mine, while continuing to back Baralaba South quietly," she said.

"As an insurance company Liberty Mutual should understand the risks of this project. The community doesn't

want a mine on this fertile river country. Now is the time for the company to cut its losses, get out of coal and stick with the insurance business."

Baralaba South still hasn't submitted an adequate environmental impact study, yet it applied for an environmental authority four days before the new rehabilitation policy deadline of November 1 last year, thereby potentially allowing it to leave unrehabilitated pit voids on the Dawson River floodplain after mining is complete.

The neighbouring Baralaba Coal mine levees broke in 2010 which led to toxic waste water being washed into the river system and eventually being released into the Great Barrier Reef.

Washington DC sues BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil & Shell

Washington, DC is suing the four largest investor-owned oil and gas companies – BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Shell – for allegedly misleading consumers about climate change, including historically undermining climate science and even now using deceptive advertising about the companies’ role in leading solutions to the climate crisis.

District of Columbia Attorney General Karl A Racine announced the consumer fraud lawsuit on Thursday, June 25. The lawsuit claims that the four oil majors violated the District’s Consumer Protection Procedures Act by engaging in misleading acts and practices around the marketing, promotion, and sale of fossil fuel products, which produce globe-warming pollution. The DC lawsuit alleges that these companies knew since at least the 1950s about the harmful consequences of burning fossil fuels and that they engaged in a campaign to deceive the public about those risks.

“For decades, these oil and gas companies spent millions to mislead consum-

ers and discredit climate science in pursuit of profits,” said Attorney General Racine. “The defendants violated the District’s consumer protection law by concealing the fact that using fossil fuels threatens the health of District residents and the environment. [The Office of Attorney General] filed this suit to end these disinformation campaigns and to hold these companies accountable for their deceptive practices.”

In particular, the DC Attorney General’s Office called out the oil industry’s use of fake grassroots groups, such as the Advancement of Sound Science Coalition, which started out as a front group for tobacco giant Philip Morris in 1993. This group had transitioned to become the Advancement of Sound Science Center in 1997 and was run out of the home of climate science denier Steve Milloy, who most recently worked in public relations for coal company Murray Energy. The group has now been phased out of existence.

The lawsuit also highlighted the role of oil and gas industry groups, includ-

ing the American Petroleum Institute and the now-defunct Global Climate Coalition — a fossil fuel-backed group launched in 1989 that for decades influenced the scientific process behind the United Nations climate assessments, using lobbyists and industry-funded scientists to attack climate scientists and manipulate the international UN climate negotiations.

The District of Columbia lawsuit is asking the court to order the companies to end their disinformation campaigns and pay civil penalties.

The announcement from DC follows Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison’s announcement that Minnesota is suing Exxon, Koch Industries, and the American Petroleum Institute for allegedly leading a 30-year campaign undermining climate science and misleading the public about the dangers of fossil fuels.

• See Dana Drugmand’s full story here:

<https://www.desmogblog.com/2020/06/25/district-columbia-fraud-lawsuit-exxon-oil-climate-disinformation>

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VIC gas emissions soar to highest in decade

While the coronavirus pandemic has reduced energy consumption in sectors such as transport and aviation, new research shows that in Victoria gas use during April was higher than in any of the preceding ten years, resulting in about 200 thousand tonnes more emissions.

The Australia Institute Climate & Energy Program has released their latest National Energy Emissions Audit, analysing the electricity sector over the previous month.

The report follows news of the Coalition Government’s push for a “gas-led recovery” from the Covid19 pandemic and widespread concern that the government’s National Covid-19 Co-ordination Committee is being used to promote the gas industry in Australia.

Key Points:

- In Victoria, gas emissions in April were higher than in any of the preceding ten years, resulting 200 thousand tonnes more emissions (0.2 Mt CO₂-e).
- International aviation fuel use in Australia down 33% for March 2020, compared with March 2019 and

domestic aviation fuel use for March 2020 is down 20% from the same time last year.

- Diesel consumption appears to have increased sharply during March 2020, in part due to panic stockpiling.
- April 2020 was the twenty-eighth successive month in which the renewable generation share of annual generation was larger than in the previous month.

Working from home burns gas

“In Victoria, over 80% of households are connected to gas supply and most use it for space heating, the state’s high gas consumption would suggest working and schooling from home has meant that many more households are using their gas heaters throughout the day,” said Dr Hugh Saddler, author of The Australia Institute’s National Energy Emissions Audit.

“While the sudden grounding of the aviation industry has led to an enormous reduction in aviation emissions, the pandemic has not led to similar reductions in non-transport energy use. Instead it has tended only to shift

the source of our emissions – rather than using electricity for heating or computers in the workplace, people are running them from their homes. In Victoria, in particular, that means using lots more gas.”

“Gas is emissions intensive, expensive, one of the worst sectors to invest in for job creation and largely owned by foreign companies that pay little tax in Australia. Meanwhile, our research shows renewables going from strength to strength,” said Richie Merzian, Climate & Energy Program Director at The Australia Institute.

“With the Victorian Parliament considering whether to lift the state’s ban on gas drilling next week, it is clear doing so will put the state’s climate ambitions further into jeopardy and be a major step backwards.

“Pursuing a so-called ‘gas-led recovery’ will not only make electricity prices higher but will make climate change worse, particularly once emissions from other sectors begin to come back into play.”

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Inside the news

The latest *Quarterly Essay* is devoted to 'The Coal Curse – resources, climate and Australia's future' by Judith Brett, a 25,000-word epic. There's a highlight on p11-12, headlined 'Forgotten farmers, mining and anti-green invective: How the Nationals became a party for coal'. Highly recommended reading, to be found at your newsagent or bookshop.

Last week, Labor leader **Anthony Albanese** wrote to PM **Scott Morrison**, offering to work on a bipartisan climate policy that would include support for that miserable old failure, **carbon capture and storage** (p10 and onwards). Opinions vary on whether this is a constructive approach or if **Labor** has simply given up on real action to tackle climate change.

Centre for Climate Policy leader **Frank Jotzo** questioned whether "Labor simply wants to shut down the issue and fight the next election on the question of the economy and the social fallout from Covid alone." Morrison and his cabinet have not made any positive response to Albanese's approach. Energy minister **Angus Taylor** blathered about keeping the lights on. It is safe to conclude neither major party has the guts to challenge **fossil fuel** interests.

On p8 we see that **satellites** are now discovering the true amount of **methane emissions** from gasfields and infrastructure. The gasco's will no longer get away with shonky guesstimates of emissions, which turn out to be massively understated.

Queensland gasco's have come up with a bright idea: they'll save themselves millions on **decommissioning gasfields** by simply abandoning roads, fences and toxic dams. They call it a gift to the farmers unhappily hosting the industry (p8). Pipelines will be left underground, another potential hazard.

In Western Australia, the **\$12 billion Prelude** gas processing vessel anchored offshore is turning into a liability, and hasn't operated for months due to safety concerns. Owner **Shell** is putting a brave face on it.

Fossil Fool Bulletin

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In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 21,200 words of news for your convenience. [Click on the links](#) to view original articles. (Subscriptions may be required)

COAL ROCKS ON

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-18/new-acland-coal-investigated-after-allegations-of-illegal-mining/12360064>

New Acland Coal operation under investigation after allegations of illegal mining

Elly Bradfield & Nathan Morris, ABC, 18/06/2020

A controversial Queensland coal mine is being investigated for potential non-compliance with its licence, which opponents allege has unlawfully mined \$500 million of coal in an area for which they never applied.

Federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley confirmed her department was investigating operations at the New Acland Coal (NAC) mine, 180 kilometres west of Brisbane.

The mine's owner, New Hope Group, strongly denied the allegations and said all operations were legal and within its mining lease.

This week, the Australian Conservation Foundation wrote to state and federal environment ministers, urging them to take action if the law had been broken.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/24/queensland-new-acland-coalmine-fined-just-9461-for-34-separate-noise-violations>

New Acland coalmine fined just \$9,461 for 34 separate noise violations

Ben Smees, Guardian, 24/06/2020

Environmental groups say "paltry" fines handed to a coalmine in Queensland's Darling Downs show that state authorities are unwilling to take action over even the most serious and repeated environmental breaches by miners.

New Acland coalmine in Queensland's Darling Downs was caught violating noise limits 34 separate times in 10 weeks and was fined \$9,461 by state authorities.

The Department of Environment and Science decided against pursuing a more serious penalty, despite finding the facts were "indisputable", the noise created a "major impact" and the miner's actions were "intentional".

Last year the same miner drilled 27 illegal bores in the Darling Downs and



Adani has stayed out of the news this week, but its air strip in the Galilee Basin is complete, while work continues on the mine site and railway line.

Graphic: Galilee Blockade

received a \$3,152 fine. Its parent, New Hope Group, was worth about \$2.3bn at the time.

The miner is now also being investigated by federal environment authorities for alleged noncompliance.

New Hope said it "vehemently rejects any suggestion it is unlawfully mining at Acland".

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/grosvenor-mine-recorded-high-methane-levels-at-least-98-times-before-explosion/news-story/92a6c0defb4cbfb-0811627c3672768cf>

Grosvenor mine recorded high methane levels at least 98 times before explosion

Nathan Edwards, Courier-Mail, 28/06/2020

The mining giant at the middle of a gas explosion that almost killed five workers was warned years ago of a potential incident, after its equipment was labelled "unsatisfactory" by inspectors.

Leaked documents detail how the Grosvenor mine in Moranbah was riddled with large "uncontrollable" pockets of methane for multiple years under company Anglo American.

These revelations sparked multiple

investigations by inspectors. They warned the company's continued methane high-potential incidents within the Grosvenor were "unsatisfactory" and must be minimised or "preferably eliminated".

Inspectors also revealed at the time that the Grosvenor site was responsible for 60% of all methane exceedances in Queensland's nine underground mines.

Anglo American recorded at least another 32 methane exceedances between that May 2018 inspection and last month's blast, which resulted in five workers fighting for life after suffering serious burns to their skin, lungs and throats.

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OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/timtreadgold/2020/06/23/shells-12-billion-lng-experiment-becomes-a-big-headache/>

Shell's \$12 Billion LNG Experiment Becomes A Big Headache

Tim Treadgold, *Forbes*, 23/06/2020

The world's biggest ship is on the way to becoming one of the oil industry's biggest bloopers.

Prelude, a 600,000-ton monster which is five times the size of the largest US aircraft carrier, is designed to produce liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other petroleum liquids.

Installed atop a remote gas field 300 miles off the northwest Australian coast, the 535-yard long Prelude is a bold experiment by the oil major, Royal Dutch Shell.

Safety problems forced the closure of Prelude in January and a re-start date has not been set for the vessel, which is estimated to have cost between \$12 and \$17 billion –with the exact price never revealed by Shell.

The immediate issue is for Prelude to satisfy Australia's offshore oil and gas safety regulator, the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Authority (Nopsema) that problems such as the failure of a backup diesel power unit have been fixed and LNG production can restart.

But even if Prelude starts another challenge for Shell, and almost everyone else producing LNG, is that the price of the liquefied fuel has fallen sharply, in line with this year's oil-price crash.

And then there's the question of costs, and while Shell has not revealed the capital cost of the vessel, it has also never revealed the operational cost.

Goldman Sachs Puts Prelude High On Its Cost Estimates

Analysts at Goldman Sachs, an investment bank, say Prelude is – when operational – the world's most expensive new LNG project with a “commercial break even” cost of almost \$20 per thousand cubic feet.

If correct that estimate means Prelude material costs are more than double LNG from other new projects and four times the cost of LNG produced in Qatar, the world's LNG leader.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climatechange-methane-satellites-insi/satellites-reveal-major-new-gas-industry-methane-leaks-idUSKBN23W3K4>

Satellites reveal major new gas industry methane leaks

Shadia Nasralla, *Reuters*, 26/06/2020

Last [northern hemisphere] fall, European Space Agency satellites detected huge plumes of the invisible planet-warming gas methane leaking from the Yamal pipeline that carries natural gas from Siberia to Europe.

Energy consultancy Kayrros estimated one leak was spewing out 93 tonnes of methane every hour, meaning the daily emissions from the leakage were equivalent to the amount of carbon dioxide pumped out in a year by 15,000 cars in the United States.

The find, which has not been reported, is part of a growing effort by companies, academics and some energy producers to use space-age technology to find the biggest methane leaks as the potent heat-trapping gas builds up rapidly in the atmosphere.

Up to now, estimates of greenhouse gas emissions from industries have relied mainly on paper-based calculations of what's pouring out of tailpipes and smokestacks, based on the amount of energy consumed by people and businesses.

But as satellite technology improves, researchers are starting to stress test the data - and the early results show leaky oil and gas industry infrastructure is responsible for far more of the methane in the atmosphere than previously thought.

The new satellite discoveries of methane leaks could lead to more stringent regulatory regimes targeting natural gas, once seen as a “clean” fossil fuel, as governments seek to combat climate change, experts say.

<https://inqld.com.au/statewide/2020/06/29/how-mining-companies-are-planning-a-1-billion-gift-to-queensland-farmers/>

How mining companies are planning a \$1 billion 'gift' to our farmers

Brad Cooper, *In Queensland*, 29/06/2020

Queensland farm groups and a key lobbyist of Australia's gas industry are applying pressure to have redundant mining assets worth more than \$1 billion transferred for agricultural use.

The plan would see dams, roads, pipelines and fences – purpose-built for the extraction of coal seam gas (CSG) – turned over for landholders to use once the mining project comes to

an end. Peak gas body, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA), has described the plan as a “win-win” that saves mining companies the cost of dismantling the infrastructure.

• *Editor's note: Just what every farmer wants – a massive dam filled with water that also contains toxic brine, btx chemicals and radioactive elements. Plus roads and fences built only to service the gaswells, often carving up cropland and grazing areas, interfering with surface groundwater flows. Then there's the dangerous underground infrastructure, often involving erosion and cattle-trapping slumps.*

CLIMATE CRISIS

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/the-surprising-way-renewables-can-help-farmers-cope-20200623-p555ba.html>

The surprising way renewables can help farmers cope

Peter Hannam, *SMH*, 24/06/2020

It turns out that with solar panels, even the grass is greener during a drought.

That's the experience of Dubbo grazier Tom Warren, who says condensation dripping off the panels arrayed across 55 hectares of his farm provided a moisture source that was the envy of neighbours.

“During the drought, everybody around here was feeding sheep [by hand],” Warren said on Tuesday as sheep grazed among the rows. “We only had to feed these sheep for about three months.”

This week, the government said the plan to foster installation of 3,000 megawatts of new-generation capacity in the Central West renewable zone had drawn interest from investors for nine times that amount.

Warren said he would welcome visitors to his farm, run by France-based renewables developer Neoen, if they needed reassurance about the benefits of clean energy.

“It's tremendous,” Warren said of the potential for renewable energy's growth. “This can drive the decentralisation of industry – this to me is the future of regional Australia.”

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/town-in-the-arctic-circle-records-temperature-as-hot-as-florida-20200622-p554t8.html>

Town in the Arctic Circle records temperature as hot as Florida

Andrew Freedman, *SMH*, 22/06/2020

A town in Siberia is likely to have set a record for the hottest temperature in

the Arctic Circle, reaching 38 degrees. Verkhoyansk, which is 4,828 kilometres east of Moscow and just inside the Arctic Circle, typically reaches a summer high of about 20 degrees.

The town of about 1,300 is located farther north than Fairbanks, Alaska, and is known for having an unusually wide temperature range. During the winter, Verkhoyansk is one of the coldest spots in the world, with temperatures frequently dipping well below minus 50 degrees.

So far in 2020, Siberia has stood out for its above-extreme temperatures, which has accelerated the melting of snow and ice; contributed to permafrost melt, which led to a major oil spill; and got the Siberian wildfire season off to an unusually early and severe start.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/26/reserve-bank-warns-of-25-gdp-loss-by-2100-unless-action-taken-on-climate-change>

Reserve Bank warns of 25% GDP loss by 2100 unless action taken on climate change

Adam Morton, Guardian, 26/06/2020

More than 60 central banks, including the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Bank of England, have warned that global GDP could fall by 25% by 2100 if the world does not act to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

They suggested if the world acted to limit emissions to net zero by about 2070, giving a 67% chance of limiting global heating to 2C above pre-industrial levels, the impact of the climate crisis on global GDP could be about 4%.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/29/australia-could-create-hundreds-of-thousands-of-jobs-by-accelerating-shift-to-zero-emissions-report>

Australia could create hundreds of thousands of jobs by accelerating shift to zero emissions – report

Adam Morton, Guardian, 29/06/2020

Hundreds of thousands of jobs could be created in Australia by hurrying the shift to zero greenhouse gas emissions, a study backed by business and investment leaders has found.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates 835,000 jobs have been lost since the coronavirus pandemic shutdown began in March. A report by Beyond Zero Emissions, an energy and climate change thinktank, says practical projects to decarbonise the economy could create 1.78m “job years” over the next five years – on average,

355,000 people in work each year – while modernising Australian industry.

The report focuses on proposals it says are already being planned and could create jobs by accelerating private and public investment in renewable energy, clean buildings, clean transport, manufacturing and land use that will happen in the years ahead anyway. Benefits would include improved air quality and new employment in regional areas.

FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/very-significant-bipartisan-support-to-protect-artefacts-at-coal-mine-20200618-p5553su.html>

‘Very significant’: Bipartisan support to protect artefacts at coal mine

Charlotte Grieve, SMH, 18/06/2020

Labor and Coalition MPs have backed a motion calling on the NSW government to ensure there would be no destruction of Aboriginal artefacts in the construction of the open-cut coal mine next to the Liverpool Plains.

The motion was put forward in the NSW upper house in an effort to put pressure on the government to intervene to protect sacred trees and artefacts near Gunnedah set to be destroyed by mining giant Shenhua.

The motion passed with support from across political parties.

“There wasn’t a single voice that said no. That’s incredibly significant,” Greens MP Cate Faehrmann said.

The majority Chinese-government owned company is set to destroy dozens of culturally significant artefacts against the will of traditional custodians, the Gomeroi people.

Ancient artefacts including grinding grooves showing marks of Gomeroi warriors sharpening spears could be destroyed as well as 4,000 hectares of agricultural land and 800 hectares of koala habitat.

The company proposed lifting sandstone slabs to relocate some of the artefacts but its own report found the rock was too fragile and would break, destroying the ancient markings. It also proposed moving the artefacts to the grounds of where an Indigenous massacre occurred around 1830, which has been condemned.

<https://www.crikey.com.au/2020/06/23/climate-change-action-after-coronavirus-pandemic/>

The government won’t go green after COVID-19 – and the public won’t care

Belinda Noble, Crikey, 24/06/2020

Sorry. If you believe COVID-19 will change everything, that Australia will “bounce forward” and begin a new era of sustainability, you’re indulging in magical thinking.

The momentum for climate action after the Black Summer bushfires has been trampled by coronavirus, and the economic downturn will ensure it doesn’t get back up.

How do I know this? Because we’ve been here before.

The last time there was a concerted public push for climate action in Australia was 2006. The millennium drought produced the driest year on record for many parts of the country.

But then the drought broke, we had the global financial crisis and were subjected to a \$22 million campaign by the Minerals Council of Australia — backed by the Liberal Party and some media — to stop the mining super tax.

That campaign perpetuated the big zombie lies that can’t be killed: only mining can sustain the Australian way of life and create jobs.

It cost then-prime minister Kevin Rudd his place in The Lodge and ensured no politicians would seriously challenge mining profits again.

Now look at today.

Under the cover of COVID-19, while parliaments were not sitting, we’ve seen coal and gas run rings around checks and balances. This includes a coal mine under Sydney’s drinking water, a multimillion-dollar relief package for miners, more than 7,000 square kilometres being opened to gas exploration in Queensland, and the moratorium on onshore gas exploration in Victoria being lifted.

The federal National COVID-19 Co-ordination Commission is stacked with fossil-fuel executives, and an oil and Gas baron is leading the Northern Territory’s Economic Reconstruction Commission.

The biggest predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. The public will refocus on immediate back pocket concerns, the fossil-fuel lobby will prevail in public policy, and the greenhouse gases will keep heating our atmosphere.

It's up to ethical individuals and organisations to redouble their efforts to try to stop history repeating itself.

• *Belinda Noble is the founder of BeNoble Communications and the co-founder of Communicators Declare*

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-23/territory-alliance-promises-fracking-ban/12384402>

Surprise election pledge to ban fracking announced by new NT party Territory Alliance

Jacqueline Breen, ABC, 24/06/2020

New political party Territory Alliance has used a turbulent session of Parliament to announce it will ban fracking in the Northern Territory if it wins the August NT election.

Leader Terry Mills flagged the party's surprise new policy in Parliament.

The policy sets the party apart from the Labor Government and Country Liberals Opposition, which both support development of the NT's onshore gas reserves through hydraulic fracturing.

In the statement, Mills said the decision was based on "widespread community concern" and said the economic case for fracking had become unviable.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-24/anthony-albanese-speech-national-press-club/12383068>

Anthony Albanese urges Scott Morrison and Coalition to work with Labor on energy policy

Jade Macmillan, ABC, 24/06/2020

Federal Opposition leader Anthony Albanese has urged the Coalition to work with Labor on a bipartisan energy policy, arguing the two sides do not need to agree on emissions targets to make progress.

Albanese said the offer of bipartisan support to the Prime Minister was "genuine".

The Labor leader said his party would support the development of carbon capture and storage (CCS), which involves capturing carbon dioxide and burying it deep underground.

Energy Minister Angus Taylor criticised Albanese's speech today at the National Press Club, arguing it left a lot of questions unanswered.

"They didn't explain how their energy policies will create a single job," he said. "They didn't explain how they're going to bring down prices, how they're going to keep the lights on,

they didn't explain what their targets were and they didn't explain how they're going to achieve those targets."

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/24/anthony-albanese-vows-to-set-new-medium-term-emissions-reduction-target>

Anthony Albanese vows to set new medium-term emissions reduction target

Katharine Murphy & Adam Morton, Guardian, 24/06/2020

Anthony Albanese has committed Labor to setting a new medium-term emissions reduction target consistent with scientific advice before the next federal election.

Albanese told reporters he was not in a position to specify what the interim target would be, but said Labor's position would be unveiled "at the appropriate time in the lead-up to the next election".

Meanwhile, the energy and emissions reduction minister, Angus Taylor, confirmed the government would give \$3.3m to Shine Energy, a company run by Indigenous traditional owners in central Queensland, for a feasibility study into a 1 gigawatt coal-fired power plant.

It follows the company's chief executive complaining it was yet to receive the money, which was promised before last year's federal election, and questioning whether it had been used as a pawn to help the Coalition retain power.

Taylor said "new, firm generation" – that which can be called on at any time – was "needed to drive down prices and bolster system strength, which is a real concern in the region". He said \$2m would also be spent on a pre-feasibility study for a 1.5 gigawatt pumped hydro plant, also near Collinsville.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/24/labors-climate-wars-truce-is-cause-for-hope-as-long-as-it-doesnt-lead-to-bipartisan-inaction>

Labor's climate wars truce is cause for hope, as long as it doesn't lead to bipartisan inaction

Frank Jotzo, Guardian, 24/06/2020

Australia has been in the climate wars since late 2009 when Tony Abbott rolled Malcolm Turnbull and made the pursuit of no climate policy a hallmark of Australian conservative politics.

Now it appears that the Labor party is offering a truce. The opposition leader,

Anthony Albanese, offered the PM to "agree on an energy investment framework that will deliver the modernisation of our energy system". Labor wants a "flexible and enduring" policy model that can adapt to different emissions targets and says it is agnostic about which policy instrument would deliver this.

The Coalition government seems a long way from putting any policy in place to actually accelerate clean investment, and thereby push out coal plants and other fossil-fuel-using equipment. Its new mantra is "technology not taxes", and plans announced so far are only to drip-feed some subsidies to industry.

Albanese called for "respect for science". That respect is what made the successful Covid response possible, and it would be the perfect foundation for bipartisanship on climate change.

A gloomier interpretation is that Labor simply wants to shut down the issue and fight the next election on the question of the economy and the social fallout from Covid alone. There are those in the Labor party who see support from blue collar constituents shrinking away and who see better electoral prospects singing the praises of fossil fuels. If the truce offered is their doing then it is really a surrender.

A bipartisanship of inaction on climate would be a nightmare for the prosperity of the country, and for our contribution to solving the climate crisis.

Taken at face value though, Albanese's intervention throws a positive challenge to the government. Here's hoping.

• *Frank Jotzo is a professor at ANU Crawford School of Public Policy. He runs the Centre for Climate and Energy Policy*

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/state-government-banking-on-coal-exports-as-world-chases-paris-targets-20200623-p555g3.html>

State government banking on coal exports as world chases Paris targets

Nick O'Malley & Peter Hannam, 24/06/2020

The state government is banking on global coal demand defying the Paris climate goals of slashing carbon emissions, predicting instead only a marginal cut in consumption of the fossil fuel by mid-century.

According to the government's new Strategic Statement on Coal Exploration and Mining the appetite for thermal coal burnt in power stations will only ease about one-tenth from just

over 1 billion tonnes a year to about 900 million by 2050.

The modest decline is well short of the Paris goal of developed nations reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 and also out of line with NSW's own net-zero target by then.

Coal was the single-largest export for NSW last year, amounting to \$23.1 billion, or about 3% of global coal consumption. Of NSW's exports, more than 80% was thermal and the rest coking coal used to make steel.

The NSW government prediction of coal demand is broadly in line with that of the International Energy Agency, but it is at odds with the cuts in coal use that scientists say the world will need to adopt if we are to achieve the goal of keeping global warming beneath 1.5 degrees.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2020-06-24/nsw-adjusts-coal-strategy/12387016>

NSW Government backs coal to lead the state into post COVID-19 recovery, but excludes some areas

David Cloughton & Cecilia Connell, ABC, 24/06/2020

The NSW Government has cordoned off parts of the state from future thermal coal mining, and released more funds to help communities adjust.

Key Points: More areas will be excluded from new coal exploration
 • The NSW Government has released another \$50m to help coal communities adjust
 • The planning process will be fast tracked for new development alongside old mines.

Deputy Premier John Barilaro announced restriction of development of thermal coal mining, and a focus on new exploration of other minerals in demand from the high tech sector, like copper, cobalt and rare earth minerals.

It would result in a gradual reduction in the production of thermal coal in the Hunter, and a shift towards development of mines in the NSW Central West and Far West.

The Government has released a map outlining areas that are excluded from future coal exploration.

It includes an area around the controversial Doyles Creek mine, the Rocky Hill mine and the Watermark and Caroon coal projects.

At the same time several other areas have been flagged for future development.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/25/up-to-11000-renewable-energy-jobs-could-be-lost-under-morrison-government-policies>

Up to 11,000 renewable energy jobs could be lost under Morrison government policies

Adam Morton, Guardian, 25/06/2020

Up to 11,000 renewable energy workers are expected to lose their jobs over the next two years under current government policies, according to a university analysis.

If correct, the loss of jobs would be equivalent to the abolition of the domestic-focused coal industry, which employs a little more than 10,000 people in mining thermal coal for local use and running Australia's coal-fired power plants.

About 26,000 people are employed in renewable energy, but the study found this would fall to about 15,000 by 2022 under existing policies, including the Morrison government not replacing the national renewable energy target.

Conversely, renewable energy jobs would be expected to reach about 45,000 by 2025 under a "step change" scenario, set out by the Australian Energy Market Operator, consistent with the goals of the 2015 Paris agreement.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-25/coal-and-gas-opponents-in-nsw-concern-over-computer-error/12390942>

Opponents of NSW gas, coal projects fear they will be silenced by computer glitch

Lucy Thackray, ABC, 25/06/2020

Opponents of two highly contentious gas and coal projects in New South Wales fear a computer glitch will deter some people from having their say at hearings into the proposals.

Applicants say they are receiving an error message when they try to apply to speak

Due to the high number of submissions received for the Vickery Coal Mine extension in Gunnedah and the Narrabri Gas Project, an online submission process has been formulated to manage the volume of speaker applications.

Both projects are being opposed by some landholders over potential land damage and impacts to groundwater supplies.

Several people have claimed that when they try to register online to speak at the Independent Planning Commission

hearings, they repeatedly receive an error code.

A spokesperson for the IPC said the online registrations were being sent successfully but that applicants were not receiving confirmation emails.

University of Sydney PhD student Gemma Viney said she also had difficulty submitting her applications to speak at both hearings.

Viney said she was concerned the technological issues were confusing potential applicants.

"This is an IPC hearing that's affecting a lot of people in a really personal way, and particularly a lot of people who don't have a lot of time to invest to keep trying to get their application through," she said.

She was also worried that people would not realise they had successfully registered to speak and would not have had time to prepare.

The concerned residents said they wanted people to understand how to successfully apply to speak.

"Please get onto the IPC, ask for a form, fill it out and return it. That way you're guaranteed a response," McKenzie said.

Applications to speak at the IPC hearing into the Vickery mine extension closed on June 18.

Applications for the Narrabri Gas Project hearing close on July 10.

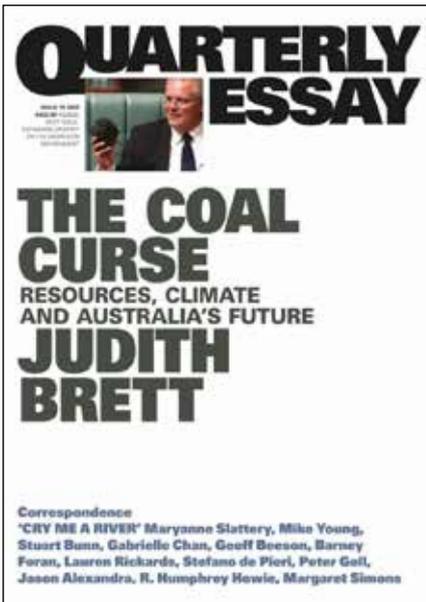
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/27/forgotten-farmers-mining-and-anti-green-invective-how-the-nationals-became-a-party-for-coal>

Forgotten farmers, mining and anti-green invective: how the Nationals became a party for coal

Judith Brett, Guardian, 27/06/2020

At the gala dinner in March this year to celebrate the centenary of the Nationals, federal president Larry Anthony boasted that the party played a key role in twice removing Malcolm Turnbull because of his climate change policy.

The Coalition had won the 2019 election against the odds, but not the seat of Richmond on the north coast of New South Wales, which had voted three generations of the Anthony family into parliament, including Larry. The demography of this once predominantly agricultural area has shifted, with sea-changers and alternatives moving into the coastal towns, and the seat has been held by Labor since



2004 with substantial support from the Greens. To survive, the Nationals needed new supporters and they were finding them in the coalminers of central Queensland.

The National party's leadership has close links to the resources industry. Past leaders Mark Vaile and John Anderson made fortunes out of resources after leaving politics; Matt Canavan's brother John is an enthusiastic investor in Queensland coal assets; Larry Anthony has lobbied for the Chinese mining giant Shenhua's Watermark coalmine on the edge of the Liverpool Plains in NSWs, which is opposed by the local farming communities. In March 2019, on Channel Ten's The Project, Waleed Aly asked Nationals leader Michael McCormack: "Could you name a single, big policy area where the Nats have sided with the interests of farmers over the interests of miners when they come into conflict?" Off the top of his head, McCormack could not name one.

The National party has become the party of coal.

The Queensland Nationals successfully weaponised coal in the 2019 election.

Even though this was as much a strategy for the party's political survival as it was a matter of conviction, it is further evidence of the fossil-fuel lobby's success.

• *This is from an edited extract from Judith Brett's Quarterly Essay 78, The Coal Curse: Resources, Climate and Australia's Future, published last week. This 25,000 word essay is essential reading - look out for it at bookstores and newsagents.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/29/australian-government-powerless-against-lobbyists-with-hidden-interests-audit-finds>

Australian government powerless against lobbyists with hidden interests, audit finds

Christopher Knaus, Guardian, 29/06/2020

The government is powerless to ensure lobbyists are not hiding "whose interests they are representing" when meeting politicians and can do nothing to check whether revolving-door rules are being adhered to, a damning audit has found.

Australia's federal lobbying system is widely considered weak compared with international and state and territory standards.

In early 2018, the Australian National Audit Office made a raft of recommendations to government to improve the system.

A follow-up audit, released late on Friday, found the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) had largely failed to act on the recommendations in the more than two years since.

The audit went on to detail glaring risks in the system that may allow non-compliance.

It said there was "no method" available to the department to work out whether lobbyists were being "transparent about whose interests they are representing when meeting with a government official".

The department also had "no power" to check whether government officials

were reporting known breaches of the lobbying rules as required, or that they were checking to ensure the lobbyists they were meeting with had listed themselves on the lobbyist register.

<https://www.michaelwest.com.au/visiting-failed-climate-strategy-of-ccs-renders-investors-speechless/>

Revisiting failed climate strategy of CCS renders investors speechless

Tim Buckley, Michaelwest.com.au, 30/06/2020

Carbon capture and storage, the prohibitively expensive climate mitigation strategy, is back on the Coalition's agenda. Yet the facts speak for themselves. Of Shell's total emissions of 656 million tonnes a year, its two CCS plants remove just 5 million tonnes a year from the atmosphere; the few plants in the world only exist because of huge government subsidies; while European oil companies use CCS primarily as a "feel-good" marketing message.



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