



# Fossil Fool Bulletin

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

[Fossilfool.com.au](http://Fossilfool.com.au)

FFB 3:6 • 14 JANUARY 2020

## New NT gaswell strikes trouble



Falcon and Origin's new Kyalla well has hit an expensive obstacle. Photo: Supplied

**Origin Energy and its joint venture partner Falcon Oil & Gas have hit a major obstacle at their \$50 million Kyalla 117 N2 appraisal well in the Northern Territory's onshore Beetaloo Sub-Basin.**

On January 13 Falcon (30% owner) said while drilling the horizontal section of the well, operator Origin (70% owner) experienced "operational challenges" and was unable to keep the well hole clean and stable.

The big-budget Kyalla 117 N2 is the first of two wells the joint venture plan to have drilled by the end of this year, targeting the Kyalla shale liquids gas play in exploration permits EP117, EP76, and EP98.

### Regulations force well to be plugged

With the horizontal section of the well, considered unstable, the JV has been forced to plug the section in line with regulations.

Origin will drill a sidetrack and attempt to drill a new horizontal

production hole section. Origin quickly released a statement saying the sidetrack would not "result in a material increase in cost" but did not release a figure what overruns would be.

### Fracking "too risky for NT"

Graeme Sawyer from the NT Protect Country Alliance said this troubling event was yet more evidence that fracking was too risky for the Northern Territory.

"Origin Energy and Falcon's blind fervour to frack the Northern Territory could lead to more serious environmental harm as drilling and fracking problems continue," he said.

Mr Sawyer said the NT public deserved more than the scant detail and industry-speak contained within Falcon's statement.

"It could be that the driller can't keep the borehole open and that the rock is collapsing around the drill bit," he said. "Risks will increase if Origin and Falcon push ahead to frack shale

rock from a different horizontal well nearby.

"A halt on all activity and a full investigation of this incident should now be required until all the issues are made clear.

"Origin Energy and Falcon should be upfront with Territorians about the problems they are experiencing.

"There are critical risk issues relating to the underlying structures in the NT and salty aquifers which need to be better understood before a full risk assessment can be made as.

### Approved before danger investigated

"Minister Eva Lawler has approved this dodgy drilling without fully understanding the risks.

"It is critical no more approvals are made until full scientific studies are completed and the risks are fully investigated."

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• **P2: Mine rehab could save Ipswich koalas**

• **P3: Roll call of deniers who have captured govt**

• **P5: How states rate on energy scorecard**

## Climate change: we want emergency action

*New research from The Australia Institute has found that two thirds of Australians believe the country is facing a climate emergency and that the Government should mobilise all of society to tackle the issue, like they did during the World Wars.*

### Key findings:

- Two in three Australians (66%) agree that Australia is facing a climate change emergency and should take emergency action. Only one in four Australians (23%) disagree.
- Two in three Australians (63%) agree that governments should mobilise all of society to tackle climate change, like they did during the World Wars.
- A majority of Coalition (56%), Labor (74%) and Greens voters (80%) agree that governments should mobilise all of society to tackle climate change.

“Australians understand how serious the climate crisis is and they want their government to respond accordingly,” says Ebony Bennett, Deputy Director of The Australia Institute.

“Across all major states and voting intentions, people are worried and want action. This is an Australia wide phenomenon and can no longer be fobbed off by the Government as an ‘inner-city’ or ‘Canberra-bubble’ concern.

“This polling was conducted in November, before the worst aspects of the current bushfire disaster had hit, but the results are still very clear. It will be interesting to see if the current crisis shifts opinions.

“Our research has shown that overwhelmingly, Australians think our country is facing a climate emergency and that less than one quarter of Australians disagree.

“Since the beginning of this fire season, the images of devastation spreading across the country have been distressing for many and most want to see all of society mobilised in response.

“The Government should start by introducing a levy on fossil fuel producers to create a National Climate Disaster Fund. Such a policy is supported by 62% of Australians and would help to shift the financial burden of these fires from Australian households, businesses and taxpayers.”

# ON THE STEPS 2020

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• See more here:  
[https://www.facebook.com/onthesteps2020/?hc\\_location=ufi](https://www.facebook.com/onthesteps2020/?hc_location=ufi)

## Mine rehab could save koalas

***The Ipswich community is calling on the Queensland government to give the south east's struggling koala population a helping hand and force mining companies to rehabilitate two sites located in the middle of prime koala habitat.***

The Ebenezer and Jeebropilly mine sites, if rehabilitated, could deliver additional vital koala habitat that links areas already identified as priority koala habitat by the government.

However, both mine sites are currently at risk of being transformed into waste dumps.

In late 2018, the then owners of the Ebenezer mine site, Zedemar Holdings, transferred the site responsibilities to W2R – a Sydney-based landfill and waste management company with no experience in mine rehabilitation.

Then, late last year, it was revealed waste company Lantrak was taking Ipswich City Council to court over that company's similarly deeply unpopular bid to transform the nearby New Hope owned Jeebropilly mine site into a waste dump.

“Conversion to landfill is a huge lost

opportunity to expand koala habitat and further secure the future of the species,” said Lock the Gate rehabilitation spokesperson Rick Humphries.

“Plans to establish large scale landfill operations at these mine sites are incompatible with koala conservation given the industrial nature of the massive landfills. In particular, the massive increase in heavy vehicle traffic in and out of these sites could be devastating to the nearby koala population.

“Rejecting the landfill applications and rehabilitating these sites to suitable native vegetation would protect both the interests of the residents of Willowbank and Rosewood and that of the koala, an iconic species facing an increasing threat of extinction.

“The Department of Environment and Science should block the applications to establish landfills on these mining sites and require that the sites be rehabilitated and returned to prime koala habitat.”

Ipswich Koala Protection Society vet Dr Rebecca Larkin said, “We have identified this area as critical habitat creating corridors and connectivity to surrounding koala habitat.”

# Roll-call of climate deniers who have captured our government's policy

An excerpt from Situation Theatre, published by Michaelwest.com, 06/01/2020.

*Situation Theatre says Big Tobacco was in no doubt about the link between cigarettes and lung cancer. Likewise, few mining magnates or the army of policy wonks, PR hacks, scientists, front groups, think tanks or the political parties they fund doubt the world is warming.*

Following Big Tobacco's self-interest playbook, they have successfully cast doubt on climate science by targeting our so-called "beacons of democracy", US and Australia.

"As the Prime Minister continues to deny the factual links between the climate, bushfire, and drought emergencies devastating the nation, there can be no doubt that the Australian state has been completely captured by fossil fuel and media billionaires," says the writer.

## Situation Theatre goes on to list some of the climate deniers influencing the Morrison government:

- Morrison's Chief of Staff, **John Kunkel**, used to be mining giant Rio Tinto's Chief Advisor for Government Relations and before that he was Deputy CEO of the Minerals Council of Australia for over six years.
- Morrison's Principal Private Secretary, **Yaron Finkelstein**, is the former CEO of Crosby Textor (now C|T), a multinational lobbying firm with close ties to the mining industry. C|T's corporate clients include coal giants Glencore and Mitsubishi Development, along with the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association and the Queensland Resources Council.
- Coalition donor, mining billionaire **Gina Rinehart's** staff have included former Liberal MP, **Sophie Mirabella**, and **Adam Giles**, former Liberal Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. Rinehart maintains a close relationship with former Deputy PM **Barnaby Joyce**, whose campaigns she's also helped fund. As co-owner of major coal mining licences in the Galilee Basin, Rinehart stands to receive significant benefits if the area is opened up, via approval for the Adani-Carmichael mega coal-mine, currently being



Prominent influencer **Gina Rinehart** with former deputy PM **Barnaby Joyce**.  
Photo: ABC/Colin Bettles

pushed through by the Coalition Government."

- Former environment minister, **Melissa Price**, gave approval for Adani's groundwater plan, despite advice from the CSIRO. She used to be the Vice-President at a mining company owned by Mitsubishi Development, co-owners of a portfolio of Queensland coal mines.
- Advocate for coal expansion and Federal Resources Minister **Matthew Canavan** has a brother, John Canavan, who was once an executive at coal giant Peabody Energy and now part owns Queensland's Rolleston coal mine. Canavan's Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility Fund has five of seven board members with strong mining industry ties.
- **Ian Macfarlane**, the Resources Minister who scrapped the mining tax, took a job as CEO of the Queensland Resources Council in 2016 – soon after quitting Parliament.
- Energy Minister, **Angus Taylor**, consulted for the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) before becoming an MP.
- In 2017, Prime Minister, **Malcolm Turnbull** appointed **Sid Marris**, an MCA Director, as his senior advisor on energy, climate change and resources. He's now back at the MCA.
- In 2018, Turnbull and Josh Frydenberg gave \$444 million in taxpayer money to the **Great Barrier Reef Foundation** without a competitive tender or application process. The chair of that foundation is **John Schubert**, an executive of Esso, owned by ExxonMobil. The Foundation's Chairman's panel is tied to Peabody and BHP, both members of the MCA.
- In 2017, **coal lobby** ads were the biggest third-party political expenditure, and in 2017-2018, **fossil fuel companies** donated \$1, 277, 933 to the Liberal, National, and Labor Parties.
- Over the last six years, the Coalition government has taken **194 actions to sabotage environmental policy**.
- The fossil fuel industry in Australia gets **\$29 billion in government subsidies** each year.
- Morrison's speechwriter, **Matthew Fynes-Clinton**, who was the Deputy Chief of Staff and Editor of *The Courier Mail*, his Press Secretary, **Andrew Carswell**, who was the Chief of Staff at *The Daily Telegraph*, and his advisor, **Thomas Adolph**, was formerly of *The Australian*.
- **Malcolm Turnbull's** Media Advisor during his Prime Ministership was **Clive Mathieson**, former Editor of *The Australian*.
- The **Murdoch empire**, is an organisation so steeped in denial as to even deny the presence of climate deniers.

• Read the full story at:

<https://www.michaelwest.com.au/climate-denying-coalition-captured-by-fossil-fuel-and-media-billionaires/>



# THE FOSSIL FOOL'S POSITIVE PAGE

## Climate Council rates states on 2019 scorecard

### Renewables benefit WA's Esperance

Joshua Hill & Giles Parkinson,  
*Renew Economy*, 12/01/2020

*The Western Australia state government says it expects emissions to be slashed by half, and costs by nearly as much, as it turns to a mixture of wind, solar and battery storage to replace at least of the fossil fuel power that currently supplies the south coast town of Esperance.*

The government and its state-owned energy utility Horizon Power announced last week that Contract Power Group had won a 20-year contract to supply electricity to the Esperance region from a proposed hybrid solar, battery storage, wind, and gas-fired generation project.

Energy minister Bill Johnston says the new long-term power purchase agreement will not only halve the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity supply, but will also provide a reduction in the cost of electricity supply of around 39%.

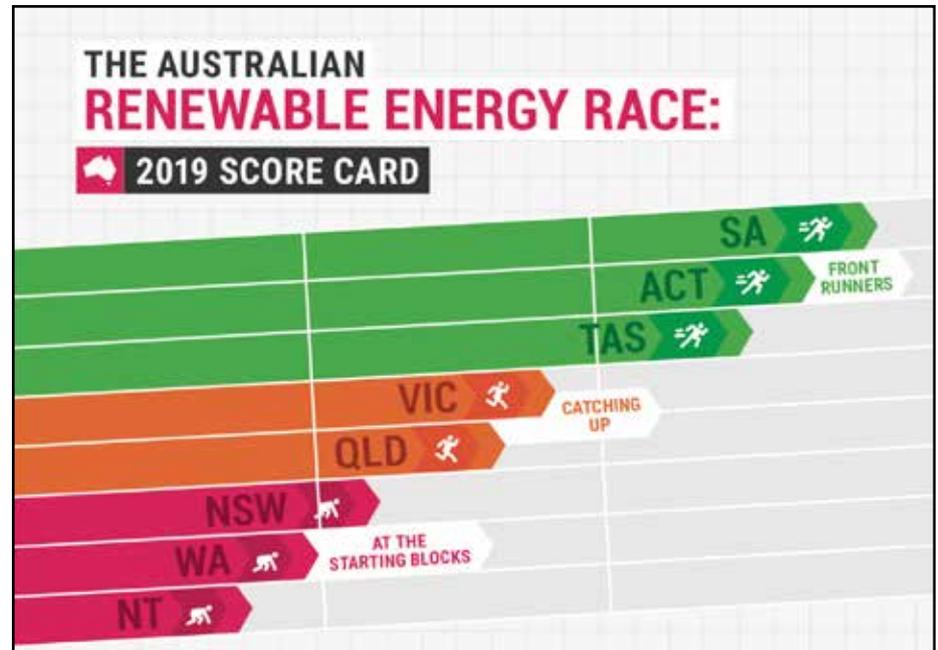
That will reduce the cost of the government subsidy to the region – to ensure that local residents pay no more than elsewhere – by around \$10 million.

A new state-of-the-art renewables hub will feature a four megawatt solar farm and two 4.3 megawatt wind turbines, which will deliver up to 46% of the town's renewable energy annually – almost doubling the amount of renewable energy produced.

This will be augmented by 5.5MW/1.9MWh of battery storage and a new, more efficient gas power station. Horizon Power says this battery will make the new gas-powered generator more efficient.

• *Read the full story at:*

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/wind-solar-and-batteries-to-slash-emissions-and-costs-in-w-a-s-esperance-54654/>



**South Australia has won last year's state and territory renewables race, with the ACT and Tasmania hot on its heels.**

South Australia, the ACT and Tasmania are way ahead of the other states and territories across a range of renewable energy metrics. These include share of renewable energy, wind and solar capacity per capita, and policies in place to support the transition to renewable energy.

South Australia is a global leader in transitioning to a grid with a high share of wind and solar PV energy. The state now generates over half of its electricity from wind and solar, and is aiming for net 100% renewable energy in the 2030s.

The ACT is on track to achieve 100% renewable energy from 1 January 2020. This is a remarkable achievement and makes the ACT just the eighth jurisdiction in the world with a population above 100,000 – and the only one outside of Europe – to achieve 100% renewable electricity.

Tasmania's Battery of the Nation plan could double Tasmania's renewable energy capacity and generate local jobs and billions of dollars in investment.

Victoria and Queensland are making good progress on the transition to renewable energy, but will need to

work hard to catch the frontrunners.

Victoria wins the 'Rising Star Award' for having the most substantial capacity of large-scale wind and solar projects in the pipeline of any state or territory.

Queensland wins the 'Most Improved Award' for eclipsing the other states and territories in terms of increased large-scale wind and solar capacity per person from last year's report. Nearly half of the large-scale renewable energy projects completed across Australia in 2018 were in Queensland.

Despite progress, Queensland is not on track to meet its target of 50% renewable energy by 2030.

The Queensland Government continues to support new fossil fuel developments in the state, which is fundamentally at odds with action on climate change.

New South Wales and Western Australia are the only states without a renewable energy target, while the Northern Territory ranks last or near the bottom on most other metrics.

The NT wins the Wooden Spoon for finishing last in this year's renewables race, as it has in every scorecard to date. However, the Northern Territory recently announced a draft aspirational target for net zero emissions by 2050.



David Rowe reproduced with permission: <https://www.facebook.com/david.rowe.5070>



## Inside the news

In early December 2019, rabid climate denier **Craig Kelly** – Liberal MP for Hughes NSW – let loose at an **Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA)** nosh-up. He told the audience, which included both Coalition and Labor Party people, to **burn** as much oil and gas as they could over the Christmas holidays.

According to an anonymous source who attended the APPEA event, Kelly said words to the effect of ‘make sure you burn as much oil and gas as you can over summer. Put your roasts in a gas-fired oven, fill up your gas bottles, and fly from one end of the country to the other.’

It was satisfying to see Kelly verbally shot down on **UK breakfast TV** in a heated exchange over the underlying cause of Australia’s bushfires in recent days (p11-12). He was challenged by the show’s meteorologist, **Laura Tobin**, who pointed out that 2019 was Australia’s hottest year on record. He posted on his notorious Facebook page that Tobin was an “**ignorant Pommy weather girl**”, although she has a degree in physics and meteorology and years of experience in the field. Kelly later deleted the comment.

Kelly is a former **furniture salesman**.

Kelly’s **Facebook** page, an obsessive denialist diatribe, out-performs both Scott Morrison and Anthony Albanese’s pages in terms of engagement, although he has only 38,000 fans on the social media platform compared to 231,000 for Morrison and 124,000 for Albanese (p12).

Let’s hope independent MP for Warringah, **Zali Stegall**, attracts plenty of social media support for a **private climate bill** she is preparing for Parliament (p12-13). Stegall unseated former PM **Tony Abbott** when she campaigned for climate change action.

We can’t afford influencers like Kelly and **Pauline Hanson** – who wants any enquiry into the bushfires to explicitly omit mention of climate change.

These people are costing us lives and **fuelling climate catastrophe**.



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# In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 20,000 words of news for your convenience.  
Click on the [links](#) to view original articles. (Subscriptions may be required)

## THE ADANI SAGA

<https://www.afr.com/companies/infrastructure/bushfires-fuel-anti-adani-protests-at-siemens-hq-20200109-p53q0r>

### Bushfires fuel anti-Adani protests at Siemens HQ

Jenny Wiggins, AFR, 09/01/2020

Images of Australia in flames and people wearing masks in front of the Sydney Opera House are being displayed in front of Siemens' global headquarters in Munich, as anti-Adani protesters try to stop the German company's involvement in the controversial Carmichael coal mine.

Adani awarded Siemens a contract on December 11 to build signalling systems for a new 200-kilometre rail link that will connect its Carmichael mine with an existing rail line to the coast managed by Aurizon.

Retaining Siemens is crucial for Adani, which may struggle to find another signalling specialist if the German company succumbs to activist pressure and cancels its estimated \$31 million contract.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6575768/siemens-to-make-decision-over-adani-mine/?cs=14264>

### Siemens to make decision over Adani mine

AAP/Canberra Times, 11/01/2020

Engineering giant Siemens will decide by Monday on its involvement in the development of a controversial Austrian coal mine being built by India's Adani, CEO Joe Kaeser says.

Speaking after meeting climate activist Luisa Neubauer in Berlin on Friday, Kaeser told journalists he had offered her a seat on the supervisory board of the group's new Siemens Energy division. Neubauer did not join the news conference.

Siemens' contract to provide signalling technology to the coal mine's railway is worth 18 million euros (\$A29 million), Kaeser said.



Calls to Siemens to reject a railway signalling contract with Adani have failed.  
Photo: Galilee Blockade

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/siemens-stares-down-thunberg-supporters-votes-to-stick-with-adani-project-20200113-p53qxy.html>

### Siemens stares down Thunberg supporters, votes to stick with Adani project

Bevan Shields, SMH, 13/01/2020

German engineering giant Siemens will stick with its involvement in the controversial Adani mine project in Queensland despite a backlash from climate activists in Europe and Australia.

Emerging from a board meeting convened to decide whether to abandon a \$29 million contract to provide signalling equipment for the coal mine's railway, chief executive officer Joe Kaeser said the company had a "legally binding and enforceable fiduciary responsibility" to carry out the project.

Kaeser cited a letter from Resources Minister Matt Canavan – a strong proponent of the Carmichael mine – which claimed the "Australian people clearly voted to support Adani at the federal election in May 2019, especially in regional Queensland".

"It would be an insult to the working people of Australia and the growing needs of India to bow to the pressure of anti-Adani protestors," Canavan wrote.

## COAL ROCKS ON

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/queensland/mining-giants-yet-to-put-a-single-dollar-into-trad-s-infrastructure-fund-20200106-p53p65.html>

### Mining giants yet to put a single dollar into Trad's infrastructure fund

Lydia Lynch, SMH, 06/01/2020

Mining companies are yet to deposit a single dollar into a regional infra-

structure fund set up in exchange for a freeze on coal royalties.

In May last year, Treasurer Jackie Trad promised coal royalties would not be increased for three more years "in exchange" for millions of dollars in contributions from mining giants to a regional infrastructure fund.

The government funnelled \$30 million to kick-start the fund and hoped miners would chip in \$70 million to bring the fund to \$100 million.

No contributions have been made since the fund was announced seven months ago, a government spokesman confirmed.

"The Palaszczuk government is progressing conversations with resources companies around the government's Resources Community Infrastructure Fund," the spokesman said.

"As outlined previously by the Deputy Premier, both BHP and Peabody have agreed in principle to supporting the community resource infrastructure fund."

Mining companies already paid \$4.4 billion in coal royalties to the state government during 2018-19.

<https://www.michaelwest.com.au/who-pays-should-ordinary-taxpayers-foot-the-bill-for-bushfires-or-the-fossil-fuel-giants-who-pay-no-tax/>

### Who Pays: should ordinary taxpayers foot the bill for bushfires or the fossil fuel giants who pay no tax?

Michael West, Michaelwest.com.au, 07/01/2020

Five of Australia's top coal companies – Peabody, Yancoal Sumitomo, Citic and Whitehaven – racked up \$54 billion in

total income over the past five years and paid zero income tax in Australia, according to Tax Office corporate tax data. Fossil fuel companies should foot the bill for the fires, not ordinary taxpayers. Michael West reports.

As bushfires rage across the country, further igniting the acrimonious debate over climate change, the Insurance Council of Australia says the NSW Emergency Services Levy may raise premiums on households by 25% and businesses by up to 50%.

The debate is now likely to move to whether fossil fuel companies, whose emissions assist in fuelling these catastrophes, should be paying, rather than households and businesses.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/the-business-case-against-coal-20200108-p53ps7.html>

### The business case against coal

*Ian Whitworth, SMH, 09/01/2020*

There's a myth that Australia must choose between jobs and fixing our position as a global carbon rogue state. It's a convenient story for the coal industry, sitting pretty as it suffocates entire, far bigger business sectors.

Thermal coal mining employs 38,000 people in Australia. Tourism employs 924,000. Climate-driven fires mean endless hotel rooms sitting empty, cafe meals not eaten, tours not taken. The business mortality rate from this non-holiday summer will be savage.

The coal industry's tactics are straight from the Big Tobacco playbook, but at least non-smokers don't have to buy the product. Big Coal has us all on its pack a day of unfiltered eucalyptus smoke right through summer, at who knows what future public health cost.

• *Ian Whitworth is the co-founder of a national event-staging business.*

<https://www.afr.com/markets/commodities/india-to-ease-mining-rules-from-march-to-spur-investment-20200109-p53pyr>

### India to ease mining rules from March to spur investment

*Nidhi Verma & Sudarshan Varadhan, AFR, 09/01/2020*

India will lift restrictions on the use of coal mined domestically and ease bidding rules from March, a minister said, as the country aims to attract foreign mining companies and reduce imports of the fossil fuel.

The auctions are aimed at attracting global miners such as BHP, Glencore, Anglo American and Peabody Energy.

India plans to introduce global tenders for coal mining blocks in March.

The amended laws will also boost exploration and auction of "deep-seated minerals like gold and diamond", he said.

<https://www.nvi.com.au/story/6574021/shenhua-coal-to-start-exploration-drilling-next-week/>

### Shenhua exploration drilling to start

*Vanessa Hohnke, Namoi Valley Independent, 10/01/2020*

Shenhua Watermark Coal will start a drilling program next week.

In a public notice, printed in the Namoi Valley Independent on January 9, the company said it would undertake further exploration drilling within the exploration license boundary.

The work is expected to start on January 13 and finish by the end of June.

In late 2019, Shenhua approached a number of landholders in the Liverpool Plains, seeking to run power poles through properties to provide electricity to the proposed coal mine.

The Chinese mining company attempted to negotiate with at least three landowners, who all rejected the offer. However, it's understood the company has found a solution.

## OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/commentary/time-https://www.afr.com/chanticleer/europe-s-heavy-blow-against-natural-gas-20200108-p53puh>

### Europe's heavy blow against natural gas

*Chanticleer, AFR, 09/01/2019*

The European Union's decision to exclude gas-fired power from its criteria for sustainable investment is a blow to the natural gas industry at a time when it wants to be seen as the preferred supplier of fuel for the transition to a lower carbon future.

The move by the EU's Technical Expert Group on Sustainable Finance to rule out natural gas for sustainable electricity generation comes as EU member countries take an increasingly aggressive stance against fossil fuels.

While there is no immediate threat to the annual LNG export revenue of \$49 billion there are likely to be longer-term implications for Australian trade relations with EU member states.

Australian governments, companies and institutions reliant on foreign funding could struggle to meet environmental, social and governance

standards set by European financial institutions and funds management companies using the EU taxonomy to guide their decision-making.

<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/seeds-of-next-lng-glut-already-being-sown-report-20200108-p53pom>

### Seeds of next LNG glut already being sown: report

*Angela Macdonald-Smith, AFR, 08/01/2020*

The notorious cyclicity of the global LNG sector is on full display, according to Bernstein Research, which is forecasting an earlier end to today's glut than most analysts but only to pave the way for another bout of oversupply.

A likely recovery in Asian demand growth for liquefied natural gas together with the winding up of the current wave of new production capacity should tighten the current oversupplied market in the second half of 2020, Bernstein analysts led by Neil Beveridge said.

Bernstein said 2020 would mark the end of a five-year expansion in global LNG production capacity when an unprecedented 130 million tonnes a year of LNG was added to the market, pushing supply well beyond demand.

But while the glut is set to come to an end, which should lift rock-bottom spot prices, the race to give the green light for new projects has intensified, the analysts said. The winners in the next race would be low-cost producers with clear funding plans and some LNG service companies.

## CLIMATE CRISIS

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/08/twitter-bots-trolls-australian-bushfires-social-media-disinformation-campaign-false-claims>

### Bots and trolls spread false arson claims in Australian fires 'disinformation campaign'

*Christopher Knaus, Guardian, 08/01/2020*

Bot and troll accounts are involved in a "disinformation campaign" exaggerating the role of arson in Australia's bushfire disaster, social media analysis suggests.

The bushfires burning across the nation have been accompanied by repeated suggestions of an arson epidemic or "arson emergency".

The false claims are, in some cases, used to undermine the link between the current bushfires and the longer, more intense fire seasons brought about by climate change.

Queensland University of Technology senior lecturer on social network analysis Dr Timothy Graham said:

“Australia suddenly appears to be getting swamped by mis/disinformation as a result of this environmental catastrophe, and we are suffering the consequences in terms of hyped up polarisation and an increased difficulty and inability for citizens to discern truth.

“Looking at the kinds of accounts that post using the #ArsonEmergency hashtag, you see that these are individuals who are hyper-partisan ideologues, behaving in a way that is not reflective of the average Twitter user.

“The conspiracy theories going around (including arson as the main cause of the fires) reflect an increased distrust in scientific expertise, scepticism of the media, and rejection of liberal democratic authority. These are all major factors in the global fight against disinformation, and based on my preliminary analysis it appears that Australia has for better or worse entered that battlefield, at least for now.”

NSW police say they have charged 24 people with deliberately lighting bushfires this season.

But that does not detract from the clear scientific evidence showing climate change is making Australia’s bushfire seasons longer and more severe.

Claims about arson are not the only falsehoods being spread on social media. Other patently false claims include that the government has created the bushfire crisis to clear land for high-speed rail. Another absurd claim is that Islamic State is somehow responsible.

Several maps purporting to show the scale of the fires also vastly exaggerate their spread.

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/business/mining/gina-rinehart-hits-back-at-celeste-barbers-criticism-over-bushfires/news-story/c2307ec1126e4af5e0474175df02be8>

### **Gina Rinehart hits back at Celeste Barber’s criticism over bushfires**

*Ben Graham, News.com.au, 09/01/2020*

Australia’s richest woman Gina Rinehart has hit back at comedian Celeste Barber who’s raised \$47 million in less than a week for the bushfire appeal, saying she’s more concerned about the “true cause” of the fires.

A statement says the billionaire does not want to “rush” to blame climate

change for the devastation. “(Rinehart) is most concerned that the true causes of this sad devastation are tackled, rather than missed in the rush to blame climate change.

“In particular, restrictions on building dams are lifted, the dangerous restrictions on allowing adequate fire breaks and restrictions on land clearing, which regulations have helped to cause life and stock losses, property damage, and damage to livelihoods and much suffering.”

It’s understood Rinehart contributed to a collection for firefighting at a function at her home where 150 guests were present on Tuesday night.

Celeste Barber, meanwhile, has racked up more than \$47 million in less than a week through her fundraising campaign.

However, she questioned whether billionaires around the world, such as Rinehart, had done enough.

<https://www.smb.com.au/business/companies/mining-magnate-andrew-forrest-announces-70-million-for-bush-fire-recovery-and-long-term-resilience-20200109-p53q38.html>

### **Mining magnate Andrew Forrest blames arson for bushfires after \$70 million donation**

*Hamish Hastie, SMH, 09/01/2020*

WA iron ore magnate Andrew Forrest has pointed at arson as the biggest contributor to this summer’s devastating fire season, rather than climate change.

In Perth on Thursday Forrest and wife Nicola announced their philanthropic arm, the Minderoo Foundation, would donate \$70 million to relief efforts and build the nation’s long term resilience to bushfires.

Forrest said while he did not want to be political he placed most of the blame for the season on arson, not climate change.

“A warming planet is but a small part of what’s happening out there in Australia as you know a large proportion of these fires have been lit by arsonists but it all comes together,” he said.

• *Note: Forrest’s donation includes \$50 million to his own tax deductible Minderoo Foundation, to fund a bushfire think tank, likely to come up with suggestions favourable to his own business model.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/08/police-contradict-claims-spread-online-exaggerating-arsons-role-in-australian-bushfires>

### **Police contradict claims spread online exaggerating arson’s role in Australian bushfires**

*Christopher Knaus, Guardian, 08/01/2020*

Victoria police say there is no evidence any of the devastating bushfires in the state were caused by arson, contrary to the spread of global disinformation exaggerating arsonist arrests during the current crisis.

A misleading figure suggesting 183 arsonists have been arrested “since the start of the bushfire season” spread across the globe on Wednesday, after initial reports in News Corp were picked up by Donald Trump Jr, US far-right websites and popular alt-right personalities.

The figure included statistics from some states covering the entirety of 2019, rather than just the current bushfire season, which began in September.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/09/when-it-comes-to-emissions-the-too-small-to-matter-argument-is-absurd-reckless-and-morally-bankrupt>

### **When it comes to emissions, the ‘too small to matter’ argument is absurd, reckless and morally bankrupt**

*Simon Holmes à Court, Guardian, 09/01/2020*

Australia’s unforgiving, unrelenting and unprecedented fires have demonstrated so clearly that the climate doesn’t recognise tricky “Kyoto carryover” accounting and doesn’t care for juvenile finger pointing at other countries.

Our only chance to maintain our standard of living, and our economy, is if all countries rapidly decarbonise. Many are committed to this, Australia is not. We cannot expect global progress if we ourselves aren’t prepared to at least pull our weight, let alone show any leadership.

Yet, we have a prime minister who looks into the camera and speaks to a people in survival mode and deep trauma and waves away our responsibility. He claims that we are responsible for just 1.3% of global carbon dioxide emissions, as if we are irrelevant.

Australia has never been irrelevant and we certainly aren’t now.

Australia is the 14th largest emitter out of 208 countries. If all countries with emissions under a “measly” 2% were lumped together we’d together be responsible for almost as much

annual emissions as China and India put together.

Australia has the highest emissions per capita of all major nations. The average Australian has four times the carbon footprint of the average global citizen, significantly due to our unusually high reliance on coal for electricity, the poor energy efficiency of our vehicles and buildings and the high domestic emissions from coal and gas extraction and processing.

The “too small to matter” argument is logically absurd, but it is also morally bankrupt and economically reckless.

We all know that throwing one piece of litter out the window wouldn't ruin the environment, but if all did we'd soon be surrounded by rubbish.

How about voting? It is a foundation of our democracy that nobody's voice is so small as to be meaningless.

Our prime minister claims we are doing our bit, however a close reading of the government's most recent projections shows that the Department of the Environment expects us to make no progress on reducing emissions through this decade – and that's assuming the LNG sector doesn't grow and that we reach 51% renewables in the National Electricity Market, which will be unwelcome news to at least a couple of ministers.

The projections also heroically assume that there are no methane leaks from the entire LNG sector, and while they give us credit for planting trees, preventing bushfires and protecting land from clearing, there's no accounting for the massive emissions of the bushfires burning right now.

Our prime minister is paralysed, unable to acknowledge that fossil fuel emissions are changing the climate, and that the changing climate is hurting Australians.

Until his government stands up to the vested interests and starts telling the truth, Morrison's authority will shrink ever smaller – as will Australia's position in the world and our nation's future prospects.

• *Simon Holmes à Court is senior adviser to the Climate and Energy College at Melbourne University*



*Media mogul Rupert Murdoch and his fourth wife, Jerry Hall, were recently snapped frolicing in the waters of Barbados. Photo: Backgrid*

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2020/01/09/rupert-murdoch-bushfire-debate/>

### **How Rupert Murdoch is influencing Australia's bushfire debate**

*Damien Cave, NYT/New Daily, 09/01/2020*

Deep in the burning forests south of Sydney this week, volunteer firefighters were clearing a track through the woods, hoping to hold back a nearby blaze, when one of them shouted over the crunching of bulldozers.

“Don't take photos of any trees coming down,” he said. “The greenies will get a hold of it, and it'll all be over.”

The idea that “greenies” or environmentalists would oppose measures to prevent fires from ravaging homes and lives is simply false. But the comment reflects a narrative that's been promoted for months by conservative Australian media outlets, especially the influential newspapers and television stations owned by Rupert Murdoch.

And it's far from the only Murdoch-fueled claim making the rounds. His standard-bearing national newspaper, *The Australian*, has also repeatedly argued that this year's fires are no worse than those of the past – not true, scientists say, noting that 12 million acres have burned so far, with 2019 alone scorching more of New South Wales than the previous 15 years combined.

And on Wednesday, Murdoch's News Corp, the largest media company in Australia, was found to be part of another wave of misinformation. An independent study found online bots and trolls exaggerating the role of arson in the fires, at the same time that

an article in *The Australian* making similar assertions became the most popular offering on the newspaper's website.

It's all part of what critics see as a relentless effort led by the powerful media outlet to do what it has also done in the United States and Britain – shift blame to the left, protect conservative leaders and divert attention from climate change.

A search for “climate change” in the main Murdoch outlets mostly yields stories condemning protesters who demand more aggressive action from the government; editorials arguing against “radical climate change policy”; and opinion columns emphasising the need for more back-burning to control fires – if only the left-wing greenies would allow it to happen.

The Australian Greens party has made clear that it supports such hazard-reduction burns, issuing a statement online saying so.

<https://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/dangerous-misinformation-news-corp-employee-s-fire-coverage-email-20200110-p53qel.html?>

### **'Dangerous, misinformation': News Corp employee's fire coverage email**

*Zoe Samios & Andrew Horner, Age, 10/01/2020*

A News Corp employee has slammed the organisation for its “irresponsible”, “dangerous” and “damaging” coverage of the national bushfire crisis, urging executive chairman Michael Miller to think about the “big picture”.

In an email distributed to News Corp Australia staff and addressed to Miller,

**STOP WATER MINING**  
THE NEXT RESOURCES BATTLE



commercial finance manager Emily Townsend said she had been filled with anxiety and disappointment over the coverage, which had impacted her ability to work.

Townsend, who has worked for News Corp Australia for five years, thanked Miller for the email about fundraising initiatives in relation to the fires, but said the efforts did not offset the company's coverage of the bushfires.

"I have been severely impacted by the coverage of News Corp publications in relation to the fires, in particular the misinformation campaign that has tried to divert attention away from the real issue which is climate change to rather focus on arson (including misrepresenting facts)," she said.

"I find it unconscionable to continue working for this company, knowing I am contributing to the spread of climate change denial and lies. The reporting I have witnessed in *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun* is not only irresponsible, but dangerous and damaging to our communities and beautiful planet that needs us more than ever to acknowledge the destruction we have caused and start doing something about it."

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2020/01/10/news-corp-employee-lashes-bushfire-reporting/>

### **News Corp employee lashes Murdoch reporting of bushfires**

*Samantha Dick, New Daily, 10/01/2020*

A News Corp employee has slammed the organisation for spreading "climate change denial and lies" through "irresponsible" and "dangerous reporting" on Australia's catastrophic bushfires.

In an email, obtained by The New Daily, Emily Townsend, a commercial finance manager at the company, hit out at executive chairman Michael Miller after he sent a company-wide email talking up all the ways News Corp is helping communities affected by the bushfire crisis.

In the email addressed to Miller, which was distributed to all News Corp Australia staff, Townsend said she was grateful for the company's fundraising efforts, but added that it did "not offset the impact News Corp reporting has had over the last few weeks".

"I have been severely impacted by the coverage of News Corp publications in relation to the fires, in particular the misinformation campaign that has tried to divert attention away from the real issue which is climate change to

focus on arson (including misrepresenting facts)," Townsend wrote.

I find it unconscionable to continue working for this company, knowing I am contributing to the spread of climate change denial and lies."

News Corp executive chairman Michael Miller issued a statement in response to Townsend's email on Friday afternoon.

He said Townsend had resigned in December and was due to leave News Corp shortly.

"We respect Ms Townsend's right to hold her views but we do not agree with them," Miller's statement reads.

*The New Daily* is aware of a growing discomfort among News Corp employees with how reporting on the crisis is being handled.

While afraid to speak openly for fear of reprisals from the company, News Corp employees were quietly cheering their colleague's stance.

One current employee described it as "huge", while another said it was "amazing".

"We're all pretty thrilled," another current news reporter said.

This week, an independent study also found online bots and trolls had been exaggerating the role of arson in the fires, at the same time that an article in *The Australian* that made similar claims started trending on the newspaper's website.

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/we-the-media-must-take-some-of-the-blame-as-australia-burns-20200106-p53pc3.html>

### **We, the media, must take some of the blame as Australia burns**

*John Birmingham, Brisbane Times, 08/01/2020*

It might seem bonkers that some of the worst climate-change deniers seem committed to blaming "greenies" for the holocaust on the eastern seaboard.

But it makes a sick kind of sense.

Somebody has to take the blame and they'll be damned, literally, if it has to be them.

So in a twist, they blame those who have been trying to save us from hellfire.

I put it to my colleagues that we bear a heavy responsibility for the dozens of human lives lost, and the near-incalculable damage to the fragile ecology of this sunburnt country.

I'm not thinking here of the shameless grifters peddling denial and culture war as a business model.

I mean the hard-working, professional news gatherers and the platforms – the papers, news shows and websites – they run.

We have made it possible for powerful commercial interests and the political parties they have captured to pretend we are not entering a death spiral.

We are, and now we know what that looks like.

But every time a legitimate journalist or editor or producer calls on a denier "to put the other side" of the climate change case they make it so much more likely another half-billion kangaroos and wallabies and koalas will burn next year, and dozens more people along with them.

The denial of climate change is not a "side" in an argument.

Climate-change denial is a complex, protean phenomenon that is as much about the genuine convictions held in good faith by deeply misinformed individuals, as is it about preserving the vast and mostly untaxed profits of fossil fuel corporations.

It is also a clear and present danger to human civilisation and life on this planet.

We in the news media, or what's left of it, cannot simply treat climate-change denial as we would disagreements over tax or health policy.

There are no experts to hear from. No counterpoints to be made.

It is all lies in the service of profit and power.

One day it will probably be a crime.

False equivalence will kill us all.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/12/disinformation-and-lies-are-spreading-faster-than-australias-bushfires>

### **Disinformation and lies are spreading faster than Australia's bushfires**

*Christopher Knaus, Guardian, 12/01/2020*

Social media claims of an arson epidemic and obstructive environmentalists have infected mainstream reporting of the bushfire crisis

Lies have spread faster than grassfire during Australia's unprecedented national emergency.

They've ranged from the exaggerated to the outrageous.

One conspiracy bizarrely claims bushfires have been lit to clear a path for high-speed rail down Australia's east coast. Others baselessly claim Islamic State is instructing its followers to wage war on the country with fire, that Chinese billionaires are using lasers to clear the path for new cities, or that eco-terrorists are trying to spur action on climate change by manufacturing a catastrophe.

Accompanying these laughable mis-truths, though, are more dangerous distortions.

They are the ones being used to deflect from climate change's role in creating longer, more severe fire seasons.

Two pieces of disinformation stand out from the rest: that an "arson emergency", rather than climate change, is behind the bushfires, and that "greenies" are preventing firefighters from reducing fuel loads in the Australian bush.

Esteemed climate change expert professor Will Steffen, a member of Australia's Climate Council and the inaugural director of Australian National University's Climate Change Institute, is concerned at how disinformation has spread with such ease.

"In my mind, I think it's a serious issue and it is potentially very dangerous," Steffen said. "That's because the bushfire situation is very dangerous ... the evidence is overwhelming that climate change is playing a prominent role in worsening bushfire conditions across Australia.

"People who are for whatever reason trying to put out false or extremely misleading information are actually doing a huge disservice to the risk to human life in the future, the risk to property, the risk to the natural world, and indeed the risk to economy."

Digital rights experts say the disinformation is yet more evidence that social media platforms are failing in their duty to act responsibly.

New South Wales police say they have charged 24 people for lighting bushfires since November.

This time around, though, the role of arson has been grossly exaggerated. Suggestions of an arson epidemic began to ferment on social media at the height of the crisis around New Year's Day. On Twitter, much of the disinformation centred around the #arsonemergency hashtag.

Queensland University of Technology senior lecturer Timothy Graham, an

expert in social media analysis, took a sample of tweets from the hashtag and analysed them for characteristics typically associated with bots and trolls. His findings suggested a clear "disinformation campaign".

A story in the Murdoch-owned national broadsheet, *The Australian*, also falsely claimed that 183 arsonists had been arrested in the "current bushfire season". That piece also went global. It was tweeted by Donald Trump Jr and followed up by InfoWars, a right-wing US website, which stated: "Authorities in Australia have arrested close to 200 people for deliberately starting the bushfires that have devastated the country, yet the media and celebrities continue to blame 'climate change' for the disaster."

The number was a gross exaggeration. It was arrived at by counting a range of bushfire-related offences other than arson – including contraventions of fire bans, for example – and used annual figures, not those for the current fire season, which began in September.

NSW's Rural Fire Service has said the major cause of ignition during the crisis has been dry lightning. Victoria police say they do not believe arson had a role in any of the destructive fires this summer.

The RFS has also contradicted claims that environmentalists have been holding up hazard reduction work. That claim was running hot on social media, and was given credibility by figures like federal Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce, a prominent Australian politician, who said "green caveats" were stopping firefighters from reducing fuel loads.

This is at complete odds with statements by the RFS commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons, who said the single biggest barrier to hazard reduction is the increasingly hot and dry weather and the "shrinking window of opportunity" within which managed burns could safely take place.

Fitzsimmons said hazard reduction is also of little utility in fires as intense as those experienced in NSW this season.

Comments like Fitzsimmons' have done little to stop the idea taking hold. Prime minister Scott Morrison has nominated the lack of hazard reduction work as a key issue he wants to investigate after the current crisis.

At the same time, Morrison has demonstrated little appetite for strengthening climate action.

## FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/good-morning-britain-host-piers-morgan-rips-into-prime-minister-scott-morrison-over-bushfire-response/news-story/ab36d90238a1a357dc155c500fdd4d9f>

### Good Morning Britain host Piers Morgan rips into Liberal MP over bushfire response

Charis Chang & Rohan Smith, News.com.au, 07/01/2020

An Australian Liberal MP has been labelled a climate denier on British breakfast television during a segment that ripped into our Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

The Good Morning Britain host Piers Morgan, who earlier criticised Morrison on Twitter for a "shameless and shameful" advertisement about the government's response to the bushfire crisis, interviewed Craig Kelly on the ITV show on Monday morning (UK time).

Morgan began by noting that Morrison's response to the bushfires devastating communities across Australia was to go on holiday to Hawaii, and asked Kelly why he did that.

Kelly explained that the bushfire response in Australia was the responsibility of state and territory governments.

Good Morning Britain wasn't done there, bringing in its meteorologist Laura Tobin to take aim at the Liberal MP.

"Australia have just had, in 2019, their highest year temperature wise ever recorded," Tobin began.

"At the moment we want everyone in the world to commit to lower our global temperature rise. You have the second highest carbon emission per person on earth and you are burying your head in the sand. This is a climate emergency. You're not a climate sceptic, you're a climate denier."

Kelly told her there were "a few issues" with her comments, including that "during the first 20 years of this century we have had more rainfall than the first 20 years of the last century".

Tobin told him, "Yes, there's more extreme weather."

Kelly was also challenged on comments he made to Australians encouraging them to use as much gas as they possibly can this summer.

"Mr Kelly, you appeared at an event a few months ago when you said words to the effect of, 'Make sure you burn as much oil and gas as you can over the



**Liberal MP Craig Kelly, who urged Australians to “burn as much oil and gas as you can over the summer”, appeared in a train-wreck interview broadcast on breakfast TV in the UK. Screenshot: Good Morning Britain**

summer, put your roast in a gas-fired oven, fill up your gas bottles and fly from one end of the country to the other,” Morgan said. “Why would you say such a thing?”

“Mr Kelly, given that most scientists in the world agree that the planet is heating at a dangerous level and that a lot of the contributing factors of that are from man-made use of fossil fuels and our carbon footprint, why would you as a senior politician in Australia encourage people to do the complete opposite to what every scientist is advising us to do?”

“Well Piers, because fossil fuels are one of the things that our lifestyle depends on,” Kelly said.

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/i-am-so-qualified-meteorologist-responds-to-craig-kelly-s-insult-20200108-p53pnd.html>

### **‘I am so qualified’: Meteorologist responds to MP Craig Kelly’s insult**

*Latika Bourke, SMH, 08/01/2020*

A British meteorologist has flatly rejected taunts by Liberal MP Craig Kelly that she is an “ignorant weather girl” after a heated exchange on Good Morning Britain about the cause of Australia’s bushfires.

In one now-deleted social media post, the MP said “Oh no! Ignorant Pommy weather girl calls me a ‘climate denier’, before going on to cite select rainfall data in an attempt to justify his sceptical position on climate change.

Tobin has a degree in physics and meteorology, four years experience as an aviation forecaster with the Royal Air Force and has worked as a broadcast meteorologist for 12 years. She

has also completed a climate course with the World Meteorological Organisation.

Nevertheless, Tobin said she hadn’t taken the insults personally and was glad to be able to contribute to the debate.

Kelly worked as an “export manager” before entering Parliament as the Member for Hughes in 2010, according to his parliamentary bio.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/liberal-mp-craig-kelly-outperforms-scott-morrison-anthony-albanese-on-facebook-20200109-p53q5n.html>

### **Liberal MP Craig Kelly outperforms Scott Morrison, Anthony Albanese on Facebook**

*Michael Koziol, SMH, 12/01/2020*

Federal Liberal MP Craig Kelly is one of Australia’s most influential politicians on Facebook, often scoring far higher levels of engagement than either Prime Minister Scott Morrison or Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese.

Kelly – who denies the link between human activity and climate change, and made headlines last week – uses his Facebook page to question climate science and sprik the coal industry on a daily basis.

Although the backbench MP has only 38,000 “fans” on the social media platform, compared to 231,000 for Morrison and 124,000 for Albanese, he regularly outperforms both men on engagement – particularly the number of people sharing his content.

Since July 1, there have been 1.33 million interactions involving Kelly’s page, compared to 1.26 million for Morrison and 720,000 for Albanese.

Kelly regularly outperforms the Prime Minister, and there have only been three weeks since July 1 when the Opposition Leader had more interactions than Kelly.

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2020/01/08/barnaby-joyce-hazard-reduction/>

### **Fire boss rejects Barnaby Joyce bushfire claims as blazes continue**

*New Daily, 08/01/2020*

The head of the NSW Rural Fire Service has dismissed claims by Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce that a lack of hazard reduction burns, not climate change, is the main culprit for Australia’s ongoing bushfire crisis.

Speaking on Channel Seven’s Sunrise program on Wednesday morning, Joyce spoke of “green caveats” – the red tape he believes prevented fire-fighters from conducting hazard reduction burns ahead of the bushfire season.

“I believe, and this is my opinion, there are too many caveats that have been placed on people, let’s call them ‘green caveats’, that impede people’s capacities to fight fires,” the former deputy prime minister said.

But RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said hazard reduction burning was challenging and the biggest impediment to completing burns was weather. Fitzsimmons said longer and hotter summers driven by climate change meant there was a “shrinking window of opportunity” for more favourable burning periods.

“Hazard reduction is absolutely an important factor when it comes to fire management and managing fire in the landscape, but it is not the panacea,” he told the ABC.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/mp-zali-steggall-hopes-climate-bill-will-shift-national-debate-20200108-p53pyv.html>

### **MP Zali Steggall hopes climate bill will shift national debate**

*Peter Hannam, SMH, 08/01/2020*

Independent MP Zali Steggall said the bushfire crisis is an opportunity to shift the debate over climate change to set goals for action across the nation before threats become overwhelming.

Steggall, who snatched the seat of Sydney seat of Warringah from former prime minister Tony Abbott at last May’s election, is planning to draw up a private climate change bill to put before Parliament.



**Independent MP for Warringah, Zali Steggall, unseated former PM Tony Abbott on a platform of action for climate change.** Photo: Zali Steggall

While much of the country had endured extreme weather conditions during 2019 – Australia’s hottest and driest year – worse was to come even if global greenhouse emissions growth slowed. “We have certain impacts locked in for at least 10 years,” Steggall said.

The “dysfunctional” influence of climate change deniers within the Coalition, though, meant “there’s a massive problem on the horizon ... but we’re not preparing for that problem,” she said.

To ensure policies focused on the long-term, the bill would also establish an independent Climate Change Commission to set “realistic carbon budgets”, much as the British, New Zealand and other nations have already done, she said.

Once ready, Steggall would seek support from crossbenchers and Labor, and hopes that at least three Coalition MPs would accept the need for serious climate action to secure its passage through the lower house.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/08/zali-steggall-urges-modern-liberals-to-support-her-proposed-climate-change-bill>

### **Zali Steggall urges ‘modern Liberals’ to support her proposed climate change bill**

*Sarah Martin, Guardian, 08/01/2020*

The independent MP Zali Steggall is calling on self-styled “modern Liberals” to support legislation to establish a new climate change framework, warning them to ignore the views of

their constituents “at their peril”.

Steggall is finalising draft legislation for a “national climate change framework” that sets out a roadmap for Australia to transition to a decarbonised economy.

The legislation is modelled on the UK’s Climate Change Act, passed in 2008, and mirrors framework laws in place in New Zealand and Ireland. Germany and Fiji are considering similar draft legislation.

Steggall aims to begin consultation on the draft bill later this month, and wants to introduce legislation in March, backed by a public campaign calling for a conscience vote in parliament.

Under Steggall’s bill, a statutory long-term target of net zero emissions by 2050 would be set, requiring five-yearly economy-wide carbon budgets to meet the goal.

A climate change risk assessment would be undertaken for all sectors, followed by a national adaptation program setting out how each sector needed to adapt to the effects of climate change that are already occurring. This includes higher temperatures, extended and hotter bushfire seasons, extended drought and floods.

Steggall is also proposing an independent expert body to replace the “powerless” Climate Change Authority.

Steggall has already begun talking to other independents about the legislation.

The Centre Alliance MP Rebekha

Sharkie said she would support the bill, and called on moderate Liberals to do the same.

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/life/science/environment/2020/01/09/denial-climate-change-scott-morrison/>

### **Denial is at the heart of PM Scott Morrison’s delusional refusal to treat the cancer of climate change**

*David Shearman, New Daily, 09/01/2020*

Australians are insecure and frightened by the severe and continuing bushfire crisis. This is fed by the growing awareness that the climate has now warmed by just over 1°C since 1910, and that 2°C is now very likely in a few decades.

Action is urgent but current evidence indicates Morrison is in climate denial and the evidence suggests that an individual’s climate change denial cannot be overcome.

[Australia’s emissions] policy is a disgrace in terms of what we are capable of as an advanced, wealthy, technological country and our indolence is called out by our disadvantaged and threatened Pacific Island neighbours.

Denial is at the heart of this “policy” and is unlikely to change. Morrison said this in his very first words on returning from Hawaii.

In addition we are the world’s biggest exporter of LNG and the third-biggest of coal and are therefore implicated in the rise of greenhouse emissions from other countries. Furthermore we help some countries to mine their fossil fuels.

The unprecedented fires in Australia have ignited a bushfire of words in the international media condemning Morrison’s words and fossil fuel policies. His delay to act and the approval of more coal mines while Australia is burning is seen as rabid climate denial.

Statements to international media by Liberal Party stalwarts Tony Abbott and Craig Kelly confirm our madness. Our international standing is falling over.

The greatest threat to Western democracy is a party system that places party interest before country. This must change if democracy is to survive and climate change addressed.

• *Dr David Shearman is Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the University of Adelaide*

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/12/scott-morrison-cant-afford-to-waste-the-bushfire-crisis-when-australia-urgently-needs-its-own-green-new-deal>

## Scott Morrison can't afford to waste the bushfire crisis when Australia urgently needs its own green new deal

Malcolm Turnbull, *Guardian*, 12/01/2020

How much of our country has to burn, how many lives have to be lost, homes destroyed before we resolve as a nation to act on climate change?

Have we now reached the point where at last our response to global warming will be driven by engineering and economics rather than ideology and idiocy?

Our priority this decade should be our own green new deal in which we generate, as soon as possible, all of our electricity from zero emission sources. If we do, Australia will become a leader in the fight against global warming. And we can do it.

Today we need common purpose, leadership and planning. We can demonstrate that abundant zero emission energy will create thousands of new jobs that will vastly exceed those lost as coal burning comes to an end.

Take the Hunter Valley. It has enormous transmission capacity which need not be wasted as its coal-fired generators close. The degraded landscape of old mines could be covered with solar panels. Pumped hydro can be created, including around Glenbawn Dam. And that is only one form of storage. The Hunter could become a green energy hub.

The children in Muswellbrook and Singleton will not have to breathe in coal dust and sulphur dioxide from the mines and power stations, and their parents will have jobs in industries that thrive with cheap, green power.

And those concerned about fuel security would recognise that the most reliable strategy is to use less imported fuels. Far from threatening the Australian weekend, electric vehicles make

Australia more energy independent and thus secure.

But above all we have to face this fact; coal is on the way out. It is, as we are seeing today, a matter of life and death. Whether we like it or not, demand for our export coal is going to decline and expire.

There are simply no more excuses. We cannot allow political prejudice and vested interests to hold us up any longer.

We will need to substantially enhance our firefighting resources, which will have to be done in close consultation with the state firefighting agencies not by dictation from Canberra. Respect, consultation and collaboration are the keys here.

We can adapt to a hotter drier climate. But the lies of the deniers have to be rejected. This is a time for truth telling, not obfuscation and gaslighting.

• *This essay was originally commissioned as part of Guardian Australia's forthcoming 2020s Vision series, in which we are asking prominent Australians for ideas that will make Australia better in the next decade. It is published today (January 12) because of its relevance to the current debate.*

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/fake-number-labor-says-morrison-is-fudging-emissions-figures-20200113-p53r3v.html>

## 'Fake number': Labor says Morrison is fudging emissions figures

David Crowe, *SMH*, 13/01/2019

Labor has accused Prime Minister Scott Morrison of using a "fake number" to mislead Australians about cuts to greenhouse gas emissions amid a growing debate within government ranks over stronger action on climate change.

The dispute centres on the Prime Minister's key claim that annual emissions are "50 million tonnes less on average" under the Coalition when experts say the fall has been marginal.

The government's own figures under the Kyoto Protocol show emissions

were 533 million tonnes in 2014, the first full year of the Coalition government, and were 530 million tonnes in 2019.

The focus on the data intensified after Mr Morrison declared on Sunday he could go "further" on emissions over time, prompting some Liberals to welcome a debate on new policy measures.

While the average figure for annual emissions is lower for the past six years when compared with the preceding six years, this is largely because the output fell significantly before the Coalition took power in September 2013.

Annual emissions including land use fell from 622 million tonnes in 2007, when Kevin Rudd led Labor to power, to 538 million tonnes in 2013 and 533 million tonnes in 2014.

The Abbott government repealed the Gillard government's price on carbon with effect from July 1, 2014.

Labor's climate change assistant spokesman Pat Conroy said Mr Morrison was misleading Australians by using an average figure to claim credit for actions taken before the Coalition formed government.

"Mr Morrison's fake number distorts the data and takes credit for reductions actually achieved under the former Labor government, not the Coalition," Conroy said.

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