



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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FFB 3:13 • 10 MARCH 2020

Environment minister agrees: No CSG without NSW Chief Scientist's recommendations

NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean has agreed that coal seam gas development in the state should not proceed ahead of implementation of five-year old recommendations from the Chief Scientist.

Speaking in NSW Budget Estimates, Kean said, "The Chief Scientist has done a body of work. They've made a number of recommendations to give the community confidence that if coal seam gas drilling were to occur that the appropriate safeguards and protections would be in place for our environment. There were a number of recommendations and my view is that the government should implement all those recommendations before granting the license to allow any drilling for coal seam gas anywhere."

Two of 16 measures implemented

An Upper House committee recently released a damning report into the implementation of the Chief Scientist's recommendations on CSG, finding only two of the 16 recommendations had been implemented in full, and eight had not been implemented at all.

Under questioning, Minister Kean accepted the implementation of the recommendations was not complete. A Santos proposal for an 850 well coal seam gasfield at Narrabri is now being assessed by the NSW Department of Planning and is expected to be referred to the Independent Planning Commission for decision soon.

Kean also affirmed that the state could meet its commitment to supply 70 petajoules of gas without Santos' deeply flawed proposal.



Lock the Gate Alliance NSW spokesperson Georgina Woods said, "Gas from Narrabri would be expensive, and would threaten the livelihoods of rural communities in the north west."

Call for a halt on Santos assessment

"We've called on the NSW Government to halt assessment of Santos' damaging gasfield following the damning findings of the Upper House inquiry. We hope the government will take the

Minister's precautionary approach and not inflict high-cost, high-risk and uninsurable coal seam gas on the people of North West New South Wales.

"If approved, the Narrabri CSG project would drill 850 gas wells right through a water recharge aquifer of the Great Artesian Basin, putting at risk precious groundwater that many rely on for food and fodder production.

"In light of his comments, we encourage Minister Kean to work with fellow ministers to halt the assessment of Santos' dangerous Narrabri CSG project and support legislation now in NSW parliament for a moratorium on coal seam gas."

Independent MP says Narrabri gasfield must not be referred to IPC

Independent NSW MLC Justin Field said, said "It is telling that even the Minister for Environment says that the Narrabri Gas Project cannot go ahead until the Government fills the gaping holes in their Gas Plan.

"Critical recommendations around assessing cumulative risks, ensuring landholders have access to appropriate insurance against long-term risks and establishing an expert standing advisory body have not been implemented at all.

"The Planning Minister, Rob Stokes, must not refer the Narrabri Gas Project to the Independent Planning Commission until the Government responds to the Parliamentary Committee's findings and proves to the community that all the recommendations of the Chief Scientist have been fulfilled.

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• P2: Gas deception exposed in report

• P3: North Coast to fight nuke power

P4: Channel Country faces gas invasion

Gas industry's Volkswagen moment

IEEFA Australia

The gas industry is misleading government, investors, customers and the broader population about the amount of carbon dioxide and methane emissions being released during production, supply and distribution of both conventional or 'natural' gas and its product for export – liquefied natural gas (LNG), finds a new report by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA).

Fines and settlement payouts for vehicle manufacturer Volkswagen are likely to reach up to \$2 billion this year following being caught out with cheating on reporting of actual emissions released from its diesel fleet in 2015.

Bruce Robertson, gas/LNG energy analyst with IEEFA notes like Volkswagen, the gas industry is also walking a thin tightrope due to the under-reporting of actual emissions released from both gas and LNG across the supply chain.

Gasco's lie about emissions

"The industry claims burning fossil fuels such as 'natural' gas is cleaner than burning coal, a commodity on its way out as the world transitions to cleaner more sustainable energy sources," says Robertson.

"This is simply not the case.

"Gas is worse than coal in the short term due to its release of methane into the atmosphere.

"Since 2012, peer reviewed studies have shown 'natural' gas emissions have been underestimated by at least 25-40%, with some studies suggesting as much as 60%.

"As every state and territory in Australia has set a target for a 50% reduction in emissions by 2050, gas, like coal, is simply not going to get us there.

"In fact, gas and LNG is looking like a very bad investment with companies misleading shareholders and the general public about the true effects of their products."

In his new report, *Is the Gas Industry Facing its Volkswagen Moment? Gas Is More Emissions Intensive Than the Gas Industry's Marketing Arm Suggests*, Robertson spells out the issue with methane and draws attention to apparent misleading information being provided by GISERA, the gas industry-funded arm of CSIRO.



A liquid natural gas (LNG) plant on Curtis Island. Photo: Bechtel

"Methane from gas poses the greatest threat to the warming climate," says Robertson.

Gas leaks make it dirtier than coal

"If you leak more than 2% to 3% of methane, it is worse for the climate than coal."

As is widely known, methane survives in the atmosphere for a shorter period than coal's carbon dioxide, but over 20 years has 86 times the planet-warming potential.

Global emissions of methane are increasing rapidly as the gas industry continues to expand globally.

"The gas industry in Australia appears to have no intention of reducing supply and therefore its emissions, as the coal industry globally is doing," says Robertson.

"While the coal industry is in terminal decline, the gas industry in Australia – supported by the government – is proposing a long list of new gas projects, both onshore and offshore.

"All will be operating well beyond 2050, with its deadly emissions contributing to our warming climate at a time when the world has agreed to reach zero emissions."

Robertson highlights the proposed gas projects including Narrabri in New South Wales, the Galilee and North Bowen Basins in Queensland, shale fracking in the Northern Territory's Beetaloo, major onshore and offshore projects in north-west of Western Australia, new provinces in the south of South Australia, and lobbying to open up onshore gas in Victoria.

"The government says gas is a transition fuel," says Robertson.

"Instead, this long list of hugely expensive infrastructure projects shows the gas industry is using the transition narrative to embed itself into the energy future of Australia in the long term, crowding out other sources of power, while lying about the effects of its product on climate change, and therefore people's day-to-day lives.

Industry deceives banks, shareholders

"Not only is this a massive stranded asset risk we will all have to carry, the industry's deception is carrying its investors and shareholders, and banks and insurers into a dark place.

"Volkswagen's lies have cost it dearly. The gas industry must also be exposed."

North Coast should fight nuclear power plants like it did CSG

Lismore MP Janelle Saffin has urged North Coast residents to help her kill off the Nationals' plans to build nuclear power plants in places like Tweed Heads and Coffs Harbour with the same determination shown to defeat Coal Seam Gas mining.

Saffin accused Deputy Premier and Nationals leader John Barilaro of dangerous behaviour in supporting One Nation Leader Mark Latham's bill in the Upper House lifting the ban on uranium mining and nuclear energy in New South Wales.

"By supporting this Bill, his former visit overseas to gather information and support for his nuclear cause, John Barilaro has well and truly opened the door to nuclear power plants in coastal communities on the North Coast. The Deputy Premier it seems is in control and Premier Gladys Berejickian seems to have lost control," Saffin said.

"I fought the Nationals off when I was Federal Member for Page to stop them then from going nuclear, damming and diverting the Clarence River, mining the Northern Rivers for Coal Seam Gas (CSG), and with the help of the people, I will fight them again.

Environment-destroying industries rejected on North Coast

"I remain rock solid against all industries that would deplete and destroy our water table and water, and our rich food bowl that supports thousands of agricultural jobs.

"I have been fighting the plastic bottled water industry, which wants to take water meant for our local communities and our farmers.

"And now the Nats are embracing nuclear power ... they keep marching us backwards and have no plans for water protection, no plans for cheap energy that they bang on about, and no plans for country New South Wales."

Saffin said Barilaro had announced his nuclear policy support on the run on Sky News, blindsiding Premier Berejickian, who during Question Time on Wednesday could not state her Government's true position on nuclear power.

"I stand shoulder to shoulder with Shadow Minister for the North Coast and Shadow Minister for Climate



Janelle Saffin. Photo: Tree Faerie

Change and Energy Adam Searle MLC, who has confirmed a McKay Labor Government will maintain a ban on uranium exploration, extraction and export," Saffin said.

Regional nuclear wastelands

Searle said regional and coastal communities now faced the grim prospect of becoming a nuclear power wasteland, after the Liberal-National Government signalled a shift to nuclear power.

Saffin backed Searle's view that the North Coast would never embrace nuclear energy, largely, she said, because it posed a direct threat to the environment, community safety and local and regional economies.

Govt urged to dump planning law change

NSW's Berejickian Government is being urged to scrap legislation discouraging planning authorities from considering downstream greenhouse gas emissions from coal mines or gasfields given almost universal opposition to the move.

A new committee report has revealed an overwhelming majority of respondents have urged the NSW Government not to proceed with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Territorial Limits) Bill 2019, mostly due to the negative impact it would have on efforts to combat dangerous climate change.

The Committee received nearly 3,000 responses to a survey about the Bill and 19 substantive submissions, with many describing the legislation as unnecessary and warning it runs the risk of NSW ignoring the climate change implications of major resource projects.

The Committee also criticised the legislation, and argued it would "contradict well-established principles of NSW planning law."

Lock the Gate Alliance spokesperson Georgina Woods said, "It is crucial that New South Wales planning authorities remain free to consider the range of environmental and social impacts of development. The Government's attempt to restrict that freedom with this Bill was ham-fisted and politically-motivated and the Bill needs to be withdrawn.

"There are a dozen new coal and gas projects in New South Wales that will together, if they proceed, result in around 2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. Where those emissions are created does not change the fact that they will cause lasting harm to the people of New South Wales by further fuelling global warming and climate change.

"New South Wales is not an island removed from the dangerous effects of climate change, as the recent devastating bushfires have shown.

"We need sober and candid public discussion about these problems and we can't have that if we blindfold planning authorities from considering it."



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Study confirms bushfires linked to climate crisis

Climate change is driving longer, hotter, more severe bushfire seasons in Australia, groundbreaking international research from World Weather Attribution shows.

The report, an attribution analysis to assess the role of climate change in the 2019-20 bushfires in Australia, has also found the risk of dangerous fire conditions has been steadily increasing since 1979, and is more than four times more likely today than in 1900.

“While the memories of scorched koalas are still so fresh in our minds, this report is yet another example of how climate change is causing longer, hotter, more extreme bushfire seasons,” said Dr Nikola Casule, Head of Research and Investigations at Greenpeace Australia Pacific.

Driven by fossil fuels

“Climate change is primarily driven by the burning of coal, oil and gas, so in order to keep Australian families safe from the worsening impacts of the climate crisis, the federal government must urgently commit Australia to 100% renewable energy.”

The report adds that if global warming hits two degrees above pre-industrial levels, conditions like the ones Australia experienced over the summer would be far more likely than today.

“People in New South Wales and Victoria are still unable to return to their homes and the viability of entire towns is in question. In the wake of one of the biggest climate disasters our country has ever seen, what Australian communities need now is strong leadership on phasing out coal, oil and gas: the primary cause of climate change.”

“The Federal Government’s plan to deal with climate change is to burn more fossil fuels and give public money to ageing coal-fired power stations, instead of taking positive action to reduce emissions and supercharge renewables,” Dr Casule said.

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Channel Country faces gas invasion



Queensland's Channel Country during a flood. Photo: @onlypassingthrough

New Right To Information documents and mapping analysis have revealed the Palaszczuk Labor Government has opened up swathes of fragile Channel Country floodplains in Queensland's south-west to potential shale gas fracking.

That's despite successive Labor Party election commitments to protect the state's pristine rivers and floodplains, and to publicly release an “independent scientific assessment” into shale gas fracking before allowing the industry to proceed in Queensland.

The mapping analysis shows since Labor was elected in 2015, gas companies have been quietly granted 738,908 hectares of special ‘potential commercial areas’ (PCAs) to prove commercial gas reserves over the Lake Eyre Basin.

Those PCAs have been granted over 348,066 hectares of Channel Country floodplains – which are mapped under the Qld Regional Planning Interests Act as Strategic Environmental Areas - and most of them extend for 15 years.

Similarly, the RTIs obtained reveal how the decision was made to give Santos a PCA over a floodplain for 15 years, without any mention of the government's policy (File B, P34).

This comes after Queensland Labor announced its draft Lake Eyre Basin policy on the Friday before Christmas, which looks set to allow gas wells, pipelines, and new roads to be built on the sensitive floodplains.

“It's devastating to learn that the Queensland Government has been quietly granting special petroleum rights over vast areas of pristine river floodplains, despite promises to protect them” said Lock the Gate Queensland spokeswoman Ellie Smith.

“We're lucky to have some of the last free-flowing desert rivers left on earth in outback Queensland, and the fracking industry should not be let loose on them.

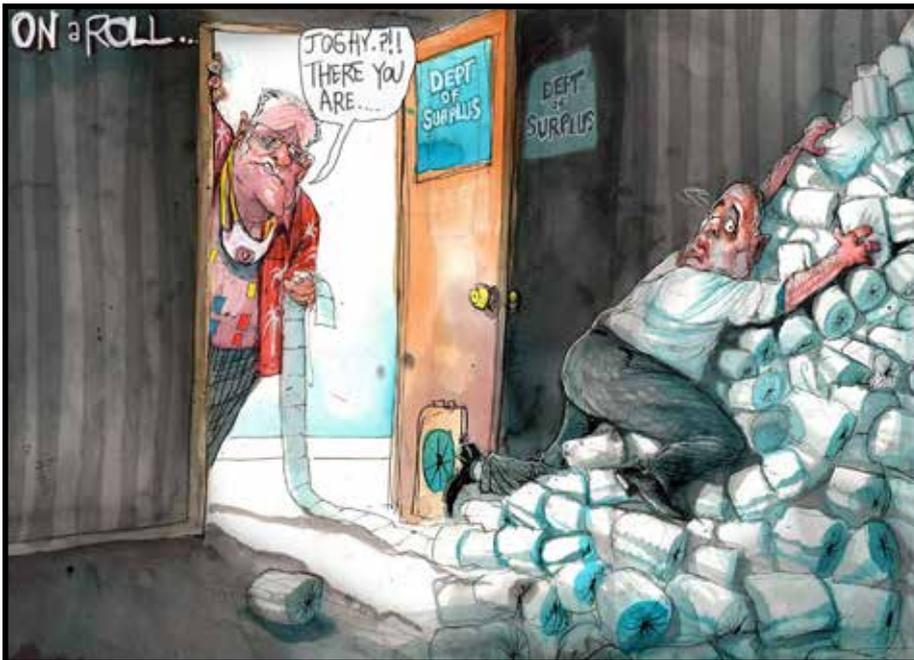
“If fracking is allowed to proceed to full production in the Channel Country it would have a massive impact on water resources and the organic beef industry that thrives in the region.

“What this all appears to show is the Palaszczuk Government is on the cusp of capitulating to the gas fracking lobby and backflipping on its election promises to protect the rivers of the Channel Country.

“We're calling on Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk to urgently reconsider the government's approach and to protect the Channel Country rivers and floodplains from fracking for good, to properly safeguard sustainable industries like agriculture and tourism, which the region relies on.

“We're also concerned the government is yet to release scientific panel reports into the impacts of shale gas on the Lake Eyre Basin. The public scrutiny of shale gas activities the government promised has not been undertaken.”

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Inside the news

The notorious executives of the now defunct **Linc Energy** have finally been charged with **criminal offences** against the environment (p7). **Peter Bond, Donald Schofield, Stephen Dumble, Jacobus Terblanche and Daryl Rattai** were all granted bail after being charged with failing to ensure Linc Energy complied with the Environmental Protection Act. No date for the trial has been set.

Linc Energy was responsible for Queensland's largest pollution event when their **shonky underground coal gasification** operation near Chinchilla contaminated thousands of hectares of agricultural land. The company was fined **\$4.5 million**, but never paid the fine because it was in liquidation.

Oil and gas companies have taken a huge sharemarket hit as the price of oil sank. With gas prices linked to oil, **Santos** will now be questioning the viability of its proposed **Narrabri gasfield**. Woodside, Origin and others may also have to delay or abandon investment decisions.

Coronavirus has also impacted the gas market as factories close down and the aviation industry cancels flights. While unfortunate for the human race, **Covid-19** is giving the planet a break, with satellites confirming a huge drop in air pollution, especially over China.

Nuclear power is the subject of a huge push from NSW Nationals leader **John Barilaro**, who attends nuclear industry events and conferences overseas. The **North Coast** is a likely destination for any nuclear power plant, and local Labor MP, **Janelle Saffin**, has called on north coasters to fight against nukes as they did against CSG. Someone should tell Barilaro **he's dreaming**.

Meanwhile, coal cuddlers **Joel Fitzgibbon** (Labor) and **Craig Kelly** (Liberal) have cosied up to fossil fuel executives over Canberra cocktails (p10). They were joined by many other MPs who belong to the Coalition's **Monash Forum** or Labor's **Otis Group**, all barracking for their fossil fuel overlords. **Santos** CEO **Kevin Gallagher** and former resources minister **Martin Ferguson** were also sipping happily at the event. I wonder who paid for the drinks?

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In the news this week

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THE ADANI SAGA

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/regional/magistrate-tells-lockon-protester-youve-done-nothing/news-story/174e52ca9d48999034c58f436944799c>

Mt Coolon: Magistrate tells lock-on Adani protester 'you've done nothing'

Jordan Gilliland, *Whitsunday Times*, 04/03/2020

An anti-Adani protester has been told “you’ve done nothing” after he chained himself to a cattle grid and blocked access to an Adani work camp.

Craig Neil Linn, 65, pleaded guilty to one charge each of causing a traffic hazard or obstruction and contravening police direction.

Representing himself, Linn said he was a retired mathematics and computer science university lecturer who had “followed closely” the advancement of climate change since he worked at the Pollution Control Commission in the 1980s.

“Against the better judgment of scientists’ advice, our government on both sides haven’t done enough ... I felt compelled to make a clear, physical statement,” he said.

Magistrate James Morton said Linn needed to “look at the economy around here”.

“Those big mines pumping out coal, that’s what’s keeping the economy going up here,” he said.

“Without these industries, (people will) be unemployed and that’s just how it’s going to be for quite a while yet.

“You’ve been dragged up here, you’re a pawn by people who want to use you, that’s obvious. Unfortunately you’ve done nothing, it’s a Band-Aid fix.”

Linn was sentenced to a 12-month good behaviour bond, with a \$450 recognisance. No conviction was recorded.



Blockaders are keeping the pressure on Adani. Photo: Galilee Blockade

OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.afr.com/politics/santos-and-bp-join-forces-on-carbon-capture-and-storage-20200303-p54697>

Santos and BP join forces on carbon capture and storage

Phillip Coorey, *AFR*, 04/03/2020

Energy giants Santos and BP have entered an agreement to bury up to 20 million tonnes of carbon each year in the Moomba gas fields and will now seek government financial support in the form of carbon credits.

BP will contribute \$20 million towards Santos’ proposed carbon capture and storage facility in far north South Australia.

Santos would be looking for support from the government’s \$2 billion emissions reduction fund and believes it can sequester carbon at less than \$30 a tonne, and possibly as low as \$26 a tonne.

Santos contends that it cannot only offset its own emissions, which is primarily the 1.7 million tonnes of CO₂ produced each year when separating gas at Moomba, but that it could sequester the emissions of others, such as cement manufacturers.

While the initial proposal is to sequester 1 million tonnes a year, the Cooper Basin has the capacity to store 20 million tonnes a year for 50 years.

The proposal involves Santos compressing the CO₂ from its Moomba plant and transporting it by pipe to

underground reservoirs which held oil and gas in place for 85 million years, “and can now provide safe and permanent storage of carbon”.

“A revenue stream, such as from Australian Carbon Credit Units, will be a critical enabler for our Moomba CCS project,” said Santos CEO.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/119993022/omv-rig-protestors-to-be-taken-off-vessel-by-helicopter>

OMV oil drilling rig protesters to be taken off vessel by helicopter

Mike Watson, *Stuff*, 04/03.2020

Two protesters who boarded an oil rig on its way to Taranaki will be helicoptered off the vessel after spending the night in crew accommodation.

The pair from the protest group Extinction Rebellion Ōtautahi boarded the rig on Tuesday morning from inflatable craft which had pulled alongside the rig while it was in Cook Strait, and secured themselves to the anchor line, an OMV spokesman said.

The rig was on its way from the Great South Basin to the Taranaki Basin to begin drilling at the Toutouwai and Maui gas fields.

OMV would be issuing trespass notices and expected regulators and relevant New Zealand authorities to take further action against people involved.

Protester Siana Fitzjohn said the pair wanted to expose OMV’s climate destroying operations in New Zealand.



“We’ve shown that a bunch of ordinary Kiwis can stand up to one of the biggest oil companies in the world,” she said in an earlier statement.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-05/santos-given-extended-gas-exploration-rights-qld-channel-country/12026070>

Contamination concerns after Santos given extended gas exploration rights over Queensland’s Channel Country

George Roberts, ABC, 05/03/2020

Documents obtained under right to information laws show the Queensland Government gave energy company Santos extended rights to explore environmentally significant parts of the Channel Country for potential commercial gas extraction.

Key points:

- The Queensland Government previously vowed to protect the Channel Country’s floodplains;
- The Department of Natural Resources, Mining and Energy gave Santos a licence to prospect for gas in the Channel Country until 2030;
- Traditional owners, Landcare groups and AgForce have written to the State Government raising concerns.

The Channel Country is a vast swathe of outback Queensland, known for the spiderly rivulets that cross the plains.

The region’s rivers and floodplains sit over the Great Artesian Basin, feed into Lake Eyre and support major organic farming operations.

Lock the Gate’s Queensland programs coordinator Ellie Smith has questioned why prospecting for commercial gas would be allowed if the State Government was truly planning to protect the area.

“Despite the commitment the Queensland Government made to protect the Channel Country, they were allowing new prospecting to go on in the floodplains in the region,” Smith said.

“They’re extremely significant and they are very fragile, so things like well-heads, the pipelines, the access roads that would be needed for full-scale shale gas fracking operation, would totally disrupt the river system.”



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-05/five-linc-energy-directors-committed-to-stand-trial-csg/12030426>

Linc Energy’s former executives committed to stand trial over failed coal gasification plant

Kate McKenna & Josh Bavas, ABC, 05/03/2020

Five executives who were in charge of Linc Energy’s experimental coal gasification plant on Queensland’s Western Downs have been committed to stand trial over their handling of the failed operation.

Linc Energy founder Peter Bond and four other former executives were charged with environmental offences relating to contamination at the company’s underground coal gasification (UCG) site near Chinchilla between 2007 and 2013.

A spokesman from the Department of Justice confirmed all five men have been committed to stand trial in the District Court in Brisbane.

The five – Bond, Donald Schofield, Stephen Dumble, Jacobus Terblanche and Daryl Rattai – were all granted bail.

The five are accused of failing to ensure Linc Energy complied with the Environmental Protection Act.

A spokesman for the Department of Environment and Science (DES) said the decision to prosecute came after “the largest and most complex ever conducted” by DES.

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/exxon-bhp-pledge-new-gas-by-early-2021-as-supply-crisis-looms-20200304-p54621.html>

Exxon, BHP pledge new gas by ‘early 2021’ as supply crisis looms

Nick Toscano, SMH, 05/03/2020

Global energy giant ExxonMobil and miner BHP say they will bring urgently needed new gas to the east-coast market by early 2021, as their joint

venture prepares to begin work on one of the largest remaining undeveloped gas reservoirs in Victoria’s Bass Strait.

The announcement on the \$550 million project known as West Barracouta comes at a critical time as the push to lift the supply of gas into the southern states takes on greater urgency.

West Barracouta is the latest in more than \$5.5 billion of investments made by BHP and Exxon in the Gippsland Basin including the Kipper Tuna Turrum offshore project and the onshore Longford gas plant upgrades, Exxon said.

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/business/citybeat/state-gas-continues-to-bleed-money-even-as-it-ramps-up-drilling-at-its-bowen-basin-project/news-story/71cc782a-82556da9532c4a5f1c52b69f>

State Gas continues to bleed money even as it ramps up drilling at its Bowen Basin project

Anthony Marx, Courier-Mail, 05/03/2020

A big question mark still hangs over the Brisbane firm aiming to develop one of Queensland’s largest untapped gas fields.

State Gas continues to bleed money even as it ramps up drilling and testing at its Reid’s Dome project in the Bowen Basin.

The company revealed a \$1.74 million loss on Thursday for the half-year to December, up from just over \$1 million in red ink in the same period in 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/08/expensive-and-underperforming-energy-audit-finds-gas-power-running-well-below-capacity>

‘Expensive and underperforming’: energy audit finds gas power running well below capacity

Adam Morton, Guardian, 08/03/2020

Australia’s existing gas power plants are running well below capacity, chal-

lenging the justification for a Morrison government program that may support up to five new gas-fired generators, according to a new report.

Energy analyst Hugh Saddler, from Australian National University's Crawford school of public policy, found the combined-cycle gas plants in the national grid – those expected to be available near constantly, sometimes described as “baseload” – ran at just 30% capacity across the past 18 months.

The Australia Institute, the thinktank that publishes Saddler's monthly energy audit which includes the gas analysis, said it suggested the government's commitment to underwrite new gas generators made little sense, and if it wanted to increase supply it should find ways to get the current fleet to operate at greater capacity.

Saddler said gas ran well below capacity largely because it was the most expensive form of electricity.

He said the idea gas would be a transition fuel in the Australian market was nearly 20 years out of date.

Richie Merzian, Australia Institute's climate and energy director, said the grid's gas plants were mostly built 10 to 20 years ago, when it was assumed the price of gas would come down and that gas would play a significant role as a transition fuel during the shift from fossil fuels to clean energy.

“In reality, gas is expensive, it's high-polluting and, as this research shows, it is under-performing,” he said. “Given this, why would we underwrite new gas-fired plants?”

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-09/audit-questions-confidence-in-csg-regulation/12026136>

'No-one is providing transparency': Audit questions compliance in Qld CSG regulation

Nathan Morris, ABC, 09/03/2020

A lack of transparency, ineffective compliance management and data, and failures of legislative function are just some of the criticisms levelled in a new audit of coal seam gas (CSG) regulation in Queensland.

Key Points:

- An audit has found Queensland's Gasfields Commission has not been performing its legislated oversight function;
- The report says the number of petroleum leases and environmental

authorities for CSG activities could not be verified;

- It also found landholders were being disadvantaged in negotiations with gas companies because of a lack of information.

<https://www.theage.com.au/business/the-economy/fears-17bn-oil-rout-could-threaten-big-energy-projects-corporate-deals-20200309-p5488l.html>

Fears \$17bn oil rout could threaten big energy projects, corporate deals

Nick Toscano, Age, 09/03/2020

Investors and analysts say a “worst-case scenario” may be unfolding for oil markets, threatening the viability of a multibillion-dollar pipeline of new projects and complicating planned mergers and acquisitions in the sector.

The value of Australia's energy sector plummeted \$17 billion on Monday as the global oil price suffered its sharpest single-day drop since the Gulf War of the early 1990s. On Monday, oil prices fell by as much as 30% after Saudi Arabia started a price war with Russia.

ASX-listed oil and gas producers took a battering. Oil Search shares shed 35%, Santos lost 26%, Woodside 18% and Caltex 15%.

As the price of Australia's exports of liquefied natural gas is linked to the oil price, the fall could pressure the balance sheets of producers including Santos, Woodside and Origin, and imperil the viability of the nation's multibillion-dollar pipeline of future LNG project investments.

NUKE MADNESS

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/barilaro-says-nationals-will-support-latham-s-nuclear-power-bill-20200304-p546pe.html>

Barilaro says Nationals will support Latham's nuclear power bill

Alexandra Smith, SMH, 04/03/2020

Deputy Premier John Barilaro says the NSW Nationals will support Mark Latham's bill to allow nuclear power in NSW, in a move likely to cause a split in the junior Coalition party.

In his strongest comments yet, Barilaro, a long-time supporter of nuclear power, said the government should “lift the ban on nuclear energy” and confirmed his party would support it.

But the position has not been taken to the Nationals' party room, and several MPs said there would be serious concern among some members, including those who hold coastal seats.

The issue dominated question time on Wednesday, with Energy Minister Matt Kean stressing the government's focus was “cheap reliable energy” provided by renewables.

But a senior Nationals MP said the issue could be very problematic for coastal MPs, where there is a strong Greens vote and anti-mining sentiment.

The MP confirmed Barilaro had not taken the issue to the Nationals' party room.

The group Nuclear for Climate Australia has identified 12 sites as “regions of interest” in NSW for nuclear reactors, including the area between Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie, Grafton, Shoalhaven and the South Coast.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-small-nuclear-reactors-could-be-nsw-s-energy-and-emissions-solution-20200305-p54757.html>

Why small nuclear reactors could be NSW's energy – and emissions – solution

John Barilaro, SMH, 06/03/2020

Highlights from Barilaro's long pro-nuke rant:

Yes, we've embraced wind and solar, and with battery storage they will continue to add more energy to the network. But they cannot deliver continuous, reliable power.

A solution is in front of us. With innovation and technological advancements, nuclear power in small modular reactors (SMRs) is tomorrow's solution for today's problem.

So why – with the growing outcry on climate change, net-zero emissions, and the need to move away from coal – are the very same people dismissing nuclear energy? Why the fear and misinformation campaign?

My sense is that, with the urgent issue of climate change and emissions reduction at the forefront of everyone's mind, it's the Trojan horse of an anti-fossil fuel and mining agenda.

A cross-party upper house inquiry into nuclear energy released its report this week, recommending we lift the prohibition on mining uranium in NSW. If we can mine uranium, we can embrace nuclear as tomorrow's solution to deal with the climate change crisis of today.

• *Nationals MP John Barilaro is Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW.*

[fossilfool.com.au](https://www.fossilfool.com.au)

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/barilaro-s-nuclear-push-bitterly-dividing-coalition-20200308-p547zm.html>

Barilaro's nuclear push bitterly dividing Coalition

Alexandra Smith, SMH, 09/03/2020

Deputy Premier John Barilaro's support for a One Nation bill to allow nuclear power in NSW is bitterly dividing the Coalition, with a senior Liberal minister prepared to quit cabinet over the issue.

In the latest split over environment policy in the Berejiklian government, several Liberal ministers say they will refuse to support Mark Latham's private members' bill when it comes before cabinet.

Barilaro's position is also causing division in his National Party, with some of the party's coastal MPs concerned that his position would put their seats at risk.

The issue has caused such anger within Liberal ranks that one senior minister told the Herald they would quit cabinet before supporting Latham's bill.

A senior Liberal minister said: "I did not get into Parliament to support a One Nation bill", while another minister said: "Crossbenchers don't set the government's agenda".

"It's amazing that John Barilaro listens to the views of One Nation over his colleagues," a fourth senior minister said.

But Barilaro shot back and said the Liberals repeatedly say they "support technology agnostic energy policy" but then refuse to have a discussion about the role of nuclear.

"Forget about this being a crossbench bill, I would take this to my party room and then put up my own bill if I need to," Barilaro said.

The tensions come as environment groups prepare to target coastal areas held by Nationals MPs, with a focus on Port Macquarie, Kempsey and Coffs Harbour, as well as Albury, Bega and Shoalhaven.

The Australian Conservation Foundation said the Australian Nuclear Association had identified several sites for nuclear reactors in NSW, many of which were in Nationals' seats.

The foundation's nuclear free campaigner Dave Sweeney said nuclear power was a "failed technology" while uranium mining brings "big risks with scant return".

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/supporters-of-nuclear-need-a-reality-check-it-s-staggeringly-expensive-20200308-p547vw.html>

Supporters of nuclear need a reality check: it's staggeringly expensive

Jim Green, SMH, 10/03/2020

What the conservatives and other supporters of nuclear power ignore is that it has priced itself out of the energy debate. Its costs are staggering and the worldwide pattern for the industry is one of stagnation and decline. In the US, the cost of the only two reactors under construction has skyrocketed to between \$20.4 billion and \$22.6 billion for one reactor. In 2006, Westinghouse said it could build a reactor for 10 times less than that amount.

Another project in the US, a twin-reactor project in South Carolina, was abandoned in 2017 after the expenditure of at least \$13.4 billion. Over in New Mexico, the world's only deep underground nuclear waste repository was closed for three years following a chemical explosion in an underground nuclear waste barrel in 2014.

Tomorrow, Japan will commemorate the ninth anniversary of the melt-downs, fires and explosions at the Fukushima nuclear plant. The Japanese government's estimate of clean-up and compensation costs is over \$300 billion, and rising.

Insiders and lobbyists freely acknowledge that the nuclear power industry is in crisis and that worldwide decline is certain. But its Australian supporters are unfazed. Their only sideways nod to reality is to argue that even if large, conventional reactors are too expensive, the emerging "small modular reactors" would be a good fit for Australia.

Again, a reality check is in order. A handful of small reactors is under construction but they have been subject to huge cost overruns and delays. William Von Hoene, senior vice-president of Exelon, the largest operator of nuclear power plants in the US, says that no more large reactors will be built in the US and that the cost of small reactors is "prohibitive".

NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro claims that Rolls-Royce plans to build 10-15 small power reactors in Britain by 2029. In fact, Rolls-Royce sharply reduced its small-reactor investment in 2018 and is threatening to abandon its R&D altogether unless the British government agrees to an outrageous set of demands and subsidies.

There are disturbing connections between small reactor projects and nuclear weapons proliferation. Rolls-Royce provides one example: part of the company's sales pitch to the British government includes the argument that a civil small-reactor industry in the UK «would relieve the Ministry of Defence of the burden of developing and retaining skills and capability» for its weapons program.

The Climate Council, comprising Australia's leading climate scientists and other policy experts, said in a 2019 policy statement that nuclear power is "not appropriate for Australia and probably never will be".

• *Dr Jim Green is the national nuclear campaigner with Friends of the Earth Australia.*

<https://www.tenterfieldstar.com.au/story/6668103/saffin-likens-nuclear-power-protest-to-csg/?cs=1514>

Saffin likens nuclear power protest to CSG

Tenterfield Star, 09/03/2020

Lismore MP Janelle Saffin is not a fan of proposals to explore using nuclear power, especially if it means power plants near her patch.

She said the North Coast should fight nuclear power plants like it did CSG.

She's urging residents to help her kill off the Nationals' plans to build nuclear power plants in places like Tweed Heads and Coffs Harbour with the same determination shown to defeat Coal Seam Gas mining.

Saffin accused Deputy Premier and Nationals leader John Barilaro of dangerous behaviour in supporting One Nation Leader Mark Latham's bill in the Upper House lifting the ban on uranium mining and nuclear energy in New South Wales.

"I fought the Nationals off when I was Federal Member for Page to stop them then from going nuclear, damming and diverting the Clarence River, mining the Northern Rivers for Coal Seam Gas (CSG), and with the help of the people, I will fight them again.

"I remain rock solid against all industries that would deplete and destroy our water table and water, and our rich food bowl that supports thousands of agricultural jobs.

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FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/cocktails-and-coal-to-capture-support-for-mps-fossil-fuel-push/news-story/e4513c40a08fc0c15c82c5755f3bd9642btr=d-47f49321e9dac307af743d14b307604>

Cocktails and coal to capture support for MPs' fossil fuel push

Greg Brown, Aus, 03/02/2020

Outspoken coal advocates Labor frontbencher Joel Fitzgibbon and Liberal MP Craig Kelly will host a cocktail event in Canberra promoting the use of carbon capture and storage to reduce the emissions of coal-fired power stations.

The pair has invited Santos managing director Kevin Gallagher and former Labor resources minister Martin Ferguson to the year's first meeting of the Parliamentary Friends of Resources.

There will be a speech on the potential for carbon-capture technology by resources veteran David Byers, the chief executive for carbon capture and storage research body CO2CRC.

Fitzgibbon and Kelly have both created pro-coal ginger groups within their parties.

Kelly's Monash Forum has pushed the Coalition government to fund a new coal-fired power station, and Fitzgibbon's Otis Group is pushing Labor to hold the line on backing coal exports and jobs in the industry.

Separately, pro-resources Labor MPs have rebranded a Labor Friends of Resources and Resources Communities friendship group in an effort to increase their influence on Anthony Albanese's caucus.

Up to 30 MPs are members of Queensland Labor MP Milton Dick's group, including frontbenchers Murray Watt, Matt Keogh, Shayne Neumann, Michelle Rowland, Madeleine King and Terri Butler.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/mar/04/climate-campaigners-condemn-insidious-cocktail-party-for-mps-and-coal-industry>

Climate campaigners condemn 'insidious' cocktail party for MPs and coal industry

Christopher Knaus, Guardian, 04/03/2020

Environmental campaigners say a cocktail night involving the fossil fuel industry and federal politicians represents an "insidious" lobbying effort to undermine climate action.

The pro-coal Liberal MP Craig Kelly and Labor's Joel Fitzgibbon will host a cocktail event at Parliament House to discuss carbon capture and storage with industry leaders on Wednesday night.

An invite was sent out by Kelly and Fitzgibbon, who chair the parliamentary friends of resources, together with representatives of Santos and the carbon capture body CO2CRC. The event is described as a "cocktail event to mark the inaugural meeting of the CO2CRC Carbon Capture and Storage Policy Forum".

That forum features companies such as BHP, Chevron, Coal21, ENI, Exxon, the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute, JPower, Shell and Woodside.

Environment group 350 Australia says the event shows the need to "crack down on the undue influence of lobby groups on our democracy".

The 350 Australia chief executive, Lucy Manne, said the event was an "insidious effort by the fossil fuel lobby to undermine action on the climate crisis".

Manne said carbon capture and storage had proven a "pipe dream of the coal and gas lobby" and diverted millions away from proven renewables.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/extending-liddell-a-major-concern-for-worker-safety-kean-says-20200306-p547g2.html>

Extending Liddell a 'major concern' for worker safety, Kean says

Peter Hannam, SMH, 06/03/2020

Extending AGL's ailing Liddell power station beyond the already delayed closure date of 2023 could pose a "major concern" for the health and safety of workers at the plant.

Matt Kean, the NSW Energy and Environment Minister, told budget estimates in Sydney on Friday the Hunter Valley coal-fired power plant was "a very old bit of kit" that "obviously becomes more dangerous" as it ages.

"It requires more investment in maintenance just to make it safe, let alone do its function, which is to provide electricity," Kean, said.

The 1680-megawatt plant was "the oldest operating coal-fired power station of its type in the world. Even Russia has more modern coal-fired power stations", he said.

Kean's comments come days after Sky News Angus Taylor, the federal Energy Minister, was preparing to keep Liddell open until 2026.

Kean also weighed in on the future of a separate, controversial energy project. He told estimates Santos's \$3 billion proposed coal seam gas project in Narrabri should not get a licence to operate unless the government had implemented all 16 of the recommendations by the chief scientist into the safe operation of the industry.

"What I'm concerned about is the appropriate safeguards are in place before [there's] coal seam gas drilling in NSW," Kean said.

"There were a number of recommendations, my view is that the government should implement all those recommendations before granting the licence to allow any drilling for coal seam gas anywhere."

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