



# 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 3:21 • 5 MAY 2020

## Coal guzzles more water than 5.2 million people Coal power uses 120 times as much water as wind or solar to produce same amount of electricity

*Every year, the coal industry in New South Wales and Queensland consumes as much freshwater as the entire population of greater Sydney or every household in Queensland, new research shows.*

*Water for coal*, by Ian Overton, Adjunct Associate Professor in Water Resources at the University of Adelaide's Centre for Global Food and Resources, and released on Monday by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), finds:

- The coal industry in NSW and Queensland consumes 383 billion litres of freshwater every year, which is equivalent to the domestic water use of 5.2 million people.
- Coal power uses 120 times as much water as wind or solar do to produce the same amount of electricity.
- Coal mining and coal-fired power consumes about 4.3% of all water used in NSW and Queensland.

"Coal mines and coal-fired power stations are massive water users on this, the world's driest inhabited continent," said ACF's Chief Executive Officer, Kelly O'Shanassy.

"While farmers recover from the last devastating drought and prepare for the next, each year the coal industry uses as much freshwater as every household in Queensland or the entire population of Sydney.

### Toxic ash dams, poisonous water

"Not only do coal mines and coal-fired power stations consume vast quantities of water that could otherwise support people, wetlands and wildlife,



the coal industry also contaminates water, leaving toxic ash dams and leeching poisonous water into creeks and rivers.

"Coal mining in Australia already faces a bleak future as the world acknowledges the enormous threats posed by global heating.

"The coal industry does not always pay a fair amount for the water it uses. Adani's mine was granted a 60-year licence to take unlimited groundwater virtually for free.

"Most of Australia's coal-fired power plants are well past their design life

use-by dates. They are old, increasingly unreliable and extremely polluting.

"When you add coal-fired electricity's water consumption and contamination to its climate pollution, it's clear Australia should rapidly replace coal-fired power with clean energy.

"Becoming a modern renewable energy nation will enable us to weather future shocks and become a safer, more sustainable and resilient country," O'Shanassy said.

• Download the very informative report, *Water for Coal*, here:

[https://www.acf.org.au/water\\_for\\_coal](https://www.acf.org.au/water_for_coal)

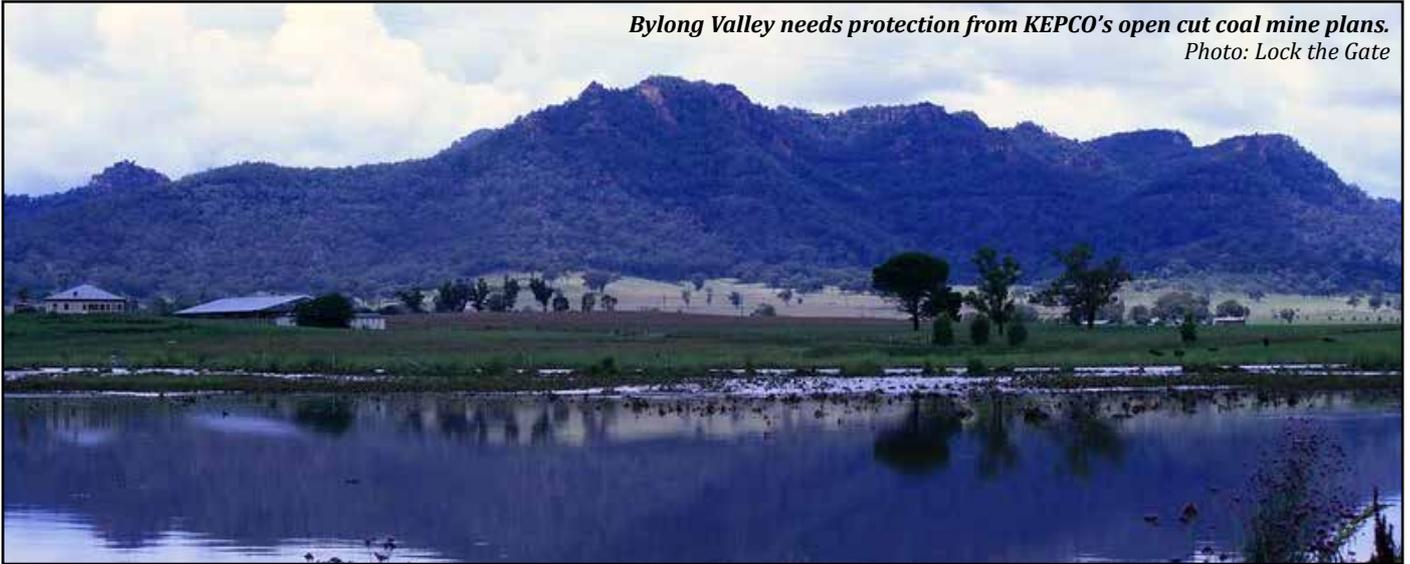


• P2: Community group joins legal challenge

• P3: \$1 mine gets \$32m from Qld govt

P3: Online hearings get thumbs down

# Community group to challenge KEPCO mine



*Bylong Valley needs protection from KEPCO's open cut coal mine plans.*

*Photo: Lock the Gate*

***A legal application by the Bylong Valley Protection Alliance (BVPA), represented by Environmental Defenders Office (EDO), to become a full party in the court case to defend the planning decision rejecting an open cut coal mine in the beautiful Bylong Valley has succeeded.***

The community group will now be able to challenge the coal company KEPCO's evidence in court. KEPCO is appealing last year's ruling by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) to refuse a new open cut coal mine. The IPC has declined to take an active role in defending its decision.

EDO CEO David Morris welcomed the court decision to admit the community group as a full party in court.

"We're obviously very pleased that we've been successful in having our client joined to the court case as a full party," said Morris. "It's vitally important that the local community, who would bear the brunt of the impacts if

the mine goes ahead, have a full voice in court.

"This local community was so relieved when the IPC refused the mine last year, but will now have to fight to keep that outcome, and we've very pleased to be able to facilitate that opportunity.

"Our client wants to protect their beautiful valley, their farms and their heritage, from the destruction that would be wrought by the massive open cut coal project, proposed for the valley."

The original ruling made by the IPC in September last year found the risks posed by KEPCO's proposed coal mine to water, land, and future generations through its contribution to climate change were too great.

As a full party with legal representation by the EDO, the BVPA will be able to object to evidence presented by KEPCO, cross-examine witnesses and file their own evidence.

The case will be heard in the Land and Environment Court from 24 to 27 August 2020.

## **Background to the case**

In September 2019, the IPC found that Kepco's proposed Bylong Valley mine to the west of Sydney was contrary to the principles of ecologically sustainable development and cited impacts on groundwater, agricultural land and aesthetic, scenic, heritage and natural values in its Statement of Reasons for the refusal.

Acting for the BVPA, EDO lawyers had presented the Commission with expert evidence, including on the mine's climate change impacts. In its Statement of Reasons, the commission said that the greenhouse gas aspects of the project were 'problematical'.

KEPCO applied for judicial review of the decision in December 2019.

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## **Why latest study fails to prove fracking safe**

***Shay Dougall, Principal of Molliwell, explains on the North West Protection Advocacy website why a recent report claiming fracking is harmless is deceptive.***

"The latest reports from the Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) are a collaboration between CSIRO, Commonwealth, state governments and industry established to under-

take publicly-reported independent research," she says.

"After the release of the convoluted 3 part report, APPEA predictably barks a bold claim "CSIRO study finds hydraulic fracturing fears unfounded" leading to the spurious and misleading headlines being picked up, run by media and championed by pro-industry politicians like Curtis Pitt MP and ex Queensland Premier Campbell Newman and the Queensland Gas-fields Commission.

"The trouble with these three GISERA reports is the deceptive slicing and

dicing of data and the broad-brush interpretations that have led to the sensational and misleading headlines."

The report has implications for Queensland's Darling Downs gas-fields, where the data was obtained from just six gaswells out of 19,000. It will also be used in the push to get the Narrabri gasfield approved in north-west New South Wales.

• **Get the full story here:**

<https://nwprotectionadvocacy.com/why-the-latest-study-by-gisera-fails-to-prove-that-fracking-is-safe/>

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# \$1 mine gets \$32 million from govt

*New freedom of information documents and corporate statements to the ASX reveal the Queensland Palaszczuk Government has granted \$32 million to mining minnow Terracom from an \$80 million rehabilitation cash bond despite departmental concerns and rehabilitation failures.*

In 2016, Terracom purchased the Blair Athol coal mine from Rio Tinto for \$1, and the Queensland Government required Rio Tinto to make an \$80M cash bond deposit to the government to cover rehabilitation of the site.

However, since Terracom purchased the mine the government has allowed the company to draw down \$32M from this bond account which has dramatically improved Terracom's financial position, despite Terracom mining through areas that had previously been rehabilitated.

The RTI documents obtained by Lock the Gate Alliance show that:

The Department of Environment and Science had major concerns about proposed rehabilitation, stating in June 2017 that the \$80M bond should be retained until topsoil trials were completed - but \$5M was released to Terracom four months later.

Queensland Treasury Corporation originally wrote a scathing assessment of plans by Terracom to purchase the mothballed Blair Athol coal mine due to concerns about the company's financial capacity.

The latest grant to Terracom in January this year of \$27M was a further draw down from the cash bond, taking the total grant to \$32M.

This was allowed despite Terracom's 2018/19 Plan of Operations revealing the company planned to mine areas

that had been rehabilitated by Rio Tinto, which would decrease the area rehabilitated by 66 hectares in total since Terracom purchased the mine.

Lock the Gate rehabilitation spokesperson Rick Humphries said, "This is an extraordinary case of a rehabilitation bond effectively being used as a cash draw-down account for an embattled junior miner.

"There are a lot of questions to be asked here as to why the government has paid out \$35M to Terracom from a rehabilitation bond account only for them to mine through areas that had already been rehabilitated by Rio Tinto before the sale of this mine.

"It's even more disturbing to see that money has been refunded apparently against the advice of the environment department and despite evidence that rehabilitation topsoil trials had failed."

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# On-line hearings get thumbs down

*The Berejiklian government's decision to enable digital hearings for two extremely controversial resource projects in NSW's north west will prevent many people from having their say.*

The NSW government has confirmed via the media that it is amending the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation to permit the Independent Planning Commission to hold the digital hearings.

Planning Minister Rob Stokes had earlier directed the IPC to find a way to hold public hearings for Santos' coal seam gas project and Whitehaven's Vickery coal mine expansion, despite the coronavirus crisis restrictions on public gatherings.

In response, Lock the Gate Alliance wrote to the Minister and the IPC, warning them that holding public hearings online or on the phone would be unlawful and would restrict community participation due to lack of access to technology, computer literacy, and reliable phone and internet connections in regional areas.

The Narrabri Gas Project is the most controversial project to ever work through the NSW Planning assessment

process, with more than 22,000 objections to the coal seam gas proposal.

"Many people living in north west NSW will struggle to participate in digital hearings because they live on the wrong side of the digital divide," Lock the Gate NSW coordinator Georgina Woods said.

"These hearings remove the community's legal rights to have the merits of any decision challenged in court, so it's vitally important that they are thorough and inclusive."

Eric Hannan, who lives in a rented house on the historic "Kurrumbede" property with his wife Carol, and owns land adjacent to the planned Vickery railway line, said the decision to hold digital meetings was "wrong."

Mr Hannan, who is aged in his seventies and worked as a stockman on Kurrumbede for 40 years, said a public, in-person hearing would have provided him an opportunity to point out Whitehaven's false claims about how the property would be impacted by the mine.

"We had a public meeting before and it was good because you could get up and have your say," he said.

"You can look at the people, and you can see the IPC people listening to you.

"When Whitehaven's employees got up, I was able to point out when they were lying. If it's all digital we'll have none of that. I've worked on this property for 40 years and I know it damn well better than they do."

Tony Pickard, who lives adjacent to Santos' proposed Narrabri gasfield, said he and other locals would now be restricted from having their say.

"There are many people in the north west who lack quality internet connection and I am one of them," Mr Pickard said.

"I'm right at the front line of potential damage from this gasfield. I have a right to be heard and to hear what Santos, the Government and all speakers have to say at any public hearing about this project.

"The Planning Minister is showing a deep lack of respect for people in this region that will be harmed by this gasfield. It's a disgrace."

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## Inside the news

The story about **TerraCom** on p3 is a perfect illustration of coal miners using political influence to make obscene profits.

TerraCom bought the clapped-out old **Blair Athol** coal mine from **Rio Tinto** for just **\$1** a few years ago.

The mine had lodged an \$80 million rehabilitation bond with Queensland's Department of Environment and Science (DES).

TerraCom re-commenced mining at Blair Athol, including areas in which Rio Tinto had done rehabilitation work.

TerraCom has many connections with the Queensland **Labor** government.

One of TerraCom's directors is former Labor Brisbane lord mayor, **Jim Soorley**. Another is former Bligh government natural resources minister **Craig Wallace**.

According to *Crikey*, TerraCom made its only political donation – \$11,000 – to Labor in 2018.

The company also paid to meet then-treasurer **Curtis Pitt** at the 2016 Labor state conference after meeting with him earlier that year.

The company's lobbying firm is co-run by Labor campaigner and former state secretary **Cameron Milner**.

TerraCom's stakeholder relations manager from 2015 to 2016 was former Labor Townsville mayor **Tony Mooney**.

Somehow, despite clear failures in rehabilitation work, and a great deal more re-hab to be commenced, TerraCom wheedled a rehab bond refund of \$32 million out of the Queensland Labor government and spent two years fighting to keep the refund a secret.

*Crikey* reports that, in recent months, TerraCom has rejected "unfounded" allegations in the Federal Court by a former employee, who accuses it of involvement in fraudulent export coal valuations and overseas bribery.

**FFB** is always tempted to spell the mining junior's name as **TerraCON**. It's amazing what the well-connected can get away with.

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# In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 10,000 words of news for your convenience. [Click on the links to view original articles.](#) (Subscriptions may be required)

## THE ADANI SAGA

### Legal threats sent to Facebook blockaders

Adani didn't get a mention in newspapers this week, but the company's contractor BMD has been sending legal threats to people making comments about the company on Galilee Blockade's Facebook page. See more at right.

## COAL ROCKS ON

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/04/nsw-and-queensland-coal-industry-uses-as-much-water-as-all-sydney-households-report-finds>

### NSW and Queensland coal industry uses as much water as all Sydney households, report finds

Lisa Cox, Guardian, 04/05/2020

The coal industry in New South Wales and Queensland is using as much water as all of Sydney's households, according to new research.

A new report by University of Adelaide water resources academic Ian Overton, commissioned by the Australian Conservation Foundation, used public data to examine the impact of coal mining and coal-fired power on water resources.

It finds the amount of water consumed by coal mining and coal-fired power in NSW and Queensland is about 383bn litres a year, roughly equivalent to the household water needs of 5.2 million people.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/04/westpac-bank-to-withdraw-support-for-thermal-coal-mining-after-2030>

### Westpac to withdraw support for thermal coalmining after 2030

Adam Morton, Guardian, 04/05/2020

Westpac has promised to stop supporting thermal coalmining, joining other major financial institutions in promising it will not back the fossil fuel industry through investments or loans beyond 2030.

It leaves ANZ as the only big Australian bank not to have pledged to get out of thermal coal, the dirtiest fuel used in mass electricity generation.

Environmental activists said Westpac's commitment, which over the next



## ARE MICK + DENISE POWER THREATENING YOU?

*Mick and Denise Power (owners of Adani contractor BMD) are sending legal threats to some commenters on Galilee Blockade's Facebook posts. Galilee Blockade advises recipients not to "freak out" and "send us a Facebook message" before taking any action. Politely complain to BMD at:*

[https://galieeblockade.net/call\\_bmd/](https://galieeblockade.net/call_bmd/)

decade includes not taking on new thermal coal customers and limiting support for mines or projects in existing coal basins, was "another nail in the coffin" of the thermal coal industry.

On thermal coal, Westpac said it would support existing customers as it reduces its exposure to the fossil fuel to zero over the next decade. It would continue to offer finance for metallurgical coal, used in steel production, while supporting technology developments to reduce the steel industry's dependence on it.

On oil and gas, it said it would assess their role in the transition to a low carbon economy while providing finance in line with its commitment to the Paris deal.

Climate activist group Market Forces said Westpac's commitment on electricity lending should "squeeze out" new coal power plants and make it near impossible to finance new gas generation.

## OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/apr/29/scientific-advice-recommending-ban-on-fracking-in-lake-eyre-basin-kept-secret-and-ignored>

### Scientific advice recommending ban on fracking in Lake Eyre basin kept secret and ignored

Ben Smee, Guardian, 29/04/2020

An independent scientific panel commissioned by the Queensland government recommended a ban on fracking in the environmentally sensitive Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre basin, but the experts' findings were made secret by the state and ultimately ignored.

Guardian Australia has obtained a leaked copy of the panel's report, which was blocked from public release and ruled subject to cabinet confidentiality by the Palaszczuk government last year.

It recommended excluding all gas wells from floodplains in the western Queensland channel country, and that unconventional petroleum and gas

production be designated as an “unacceptable use” in the area.

After approaching the government to seek a response, Guardian Australia was subsequently contacted unsolicited by the gas industry lobby, which stated it was aware of the story and offered to provide a comment.

It has since been revealed by the ABC that last year, while the framework was being developed and scientific studies under way, Queensland granted gas company Santos expanded exploration rights covering large swaths of the channel country.

A leaked copy of the report shows the panel raised concerns about potential gasfield development and how it might alter the course of the free-flowing rivers.

It found potential impacts from petroleum, gas, mining and infrastructure development included the “loss of connectivity ... creating barriers on floodplains diverting flows away from natural wetlands”.

The report said potential impacts included “direct loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitats”; changes to groundwater quality; the risk of well failure; the reinjection of flowback water; spills of drilling fluids; and changes to overland flow paths due to infrastructure and subsidence.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-30/gas-fracking-channel-country-should-stop-department-report-qld/12201548>

### **Gas fracking in Channel Country should stop, leaked department report told Queensland Government**

*George Roberts, ABC, 30/04/2020*

A leaked expert report shows the Queensland Government was advised to stop further gas fracking in the state’s sensitive Channel Country, but a separate department had already extended gas exploration until 2030.

A confidential report to the Queensland Environment Department prepared by environmental scientists recommended that infrastructure for gas fracking and mining was “unacceptable” in the Lake Eyre Basin floodplains, known as the Channel Country.

The 47-page report, obtained by ABC News, lists scores of potential risks associated with so-called unconventional gas extraction, (also known as gas fracturing or fracking), including direct impacts on threatened species and water quality.

As ABC News revealed earlier this year, the Queensland Mines Department in March 2019 had approved Santos to keep exploring commercial gas opportunities in the area until 2030, despite an election commitment to protect “pristine rivers” and work with stakeholders.

A union of environmentalists, graziers, traditional owners and other stakeholders, known as the Western Rivers Alliance, said the promised consultation did not happen.

The report, recommending that further fracking for natural gas be stopped, was received by the Environment Department in October last year.

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/woodside-warns-renewables-lack-scale-as-rivals-turn-green-leaf-20200501-p54p2u.html>

### **Woodside warns renewables ‘lack scale’ as rivals turn green leaf**

*Nick Toscano, SMH, 01/05/2020*

Australian oil and gas giant Woodside has expressed reservations about following major European rivals in committing to diversify away from fossil fuels into the renewable energy industry, despite facing a historic investor revolt on climate change.

In the largest-ever vote for a motion of its kind in Australia, more than 50% of Woodside’s shareholders defied the board this week and backed demands for the company to establish hard targets to bring its own emissions and emissions caused by the use of its products globally in line with the Paris agreement to keep global warming below 2 degrees.

## **HYDROGEN HYPE**

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/300m-clean-energy-fund-to-back-fossil-fuel-hydrogen-projects-20200503-p54pdr.html>

### **\$300m clean energy fund to back fossil-fuel hydrogen projects**

*Mike Foley, SMH, 04/05/2020*

The Morrison government has committed \$300 million to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and instructed it to invest in new hydrogen energy projects including those powered by fossil fuels.

The move makes clear the government’s position on the debate over the potential to develop an emissions-free hydrogen industry powered exclusively by renewable energy.

“Gas and gas transmission networks already play an essential role in energy

reliability, but gas has even more potential as a resource to produce and transmit hydrogen,” said Energy and Emissions Reduction Minister Angus Taylor.

Renewable energy advocates, along with Labor-led governments in Queensland, Western Australia and the ACT, argue fossil-fuelled hydrogen should be barred from public funds, which should flow to “green hydrogen” powered by renewables.

Chief Scientist Alan Finkel has said a domestic hydrogen industry could underpin an energy export boom for Australia, and Australia should develop it using renewables and fossil fuel to avoid the risks associated with reliance on any one fuel source.

“By producing hydrogen from natural gas or coal, using carbon capture and permanent storage, we can add back two more lanes to our energy highway, ensuring we have four primary energy sources to meet the needs of the future – solar, wind, hydrogen from natural gas, and hydrogen from coal,” Dr Finkel said.

In time, green hydrogen could take over and drive a net zero emissions global economy, according to Dr Finkel.

The Advancing Hydrogen Fund will provide debt or equity finance to commercial projects requiring \$10 million or more in capital, which Clean Energy Finance Corporation chief executive Ian Learmonth said would fill market gaps created by “technology, development or commercial challenges”.

## **CLIMATE CRISIS**

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/apr/30/covid-19-crisis-demand-fossil-fuels-iea-renewable-electricity>

### **Covid-19 crisis will wipe out demand for fossil fuels, says IEA**

*Jillian Ambrose, ABC, 30/04/2020*

Renewable electricity will be the only source resilient to the biggest global energy shock in 70 years triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, according to the world’s energy watchdog.

The International Energy Agency said the outbreak of Covid-19 would wipe out demand for fossil fuels by prompting a collapse in energy demand seven times greater than the slump caused by the global financial crisis.

In a report, the IEA said the most severe plunge in energy demand since the second world war would trigger multi-decade lows for the world’s

consumption of oil, gas and coal while renewable energy continued to grow.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/01/fossil-fuel-firms-coronavirus-package-aid>

### **Fossil fuel firms linked to Trump get millions in coronavirus small business aid**

*Emily Holden, Guardian, 01/05/2020*

US fossil fuel companies have taken at least \$50m in taxpayer money they probably won't have to pay back, according to a review of coronavirus aid meant for struggling small businesses by the investigative research group Documented and the Guardian.

A total of \$28m is going to three coal mining companies, all with ties to Trump officials, bolstering a dying American industry and a fuel that scientists insist world leaders must shift away from to avoid the worst of the climate crisis.

The other \$22m is being paid out to oil and gas services and equipment providers and other firms that work with drillers and coal miners.

The Trump administration has also rescinded nearly all of the environment and climate protections the fossil fuel industry has opposed.

Fossil fuel companies can also take advantage of tax benefits under the coronavirus legislation, including deferring payment of social security and medicare taxes.

Graham Steele, who directs the corporations and society initiative at Stanford Graduate School of Business, called the situation the "classic disaster scenario where an opportunistic administration and industry is taking advantage of a crisis".

"And by the way, these are industries driving climate change. It's both a bad financial proposition of the Fed and for taxpayers and a bad situation for the planet."

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/never-more-critical-government-pressed-on-low-carbon-recovery-study-20200503-p54pcl.html>

### **'Never more critical': Government pressed on low-carbon recovery study**

*Peter Hannam, SMH, 04/05/2020*

The Berejiklian government is being urged by a lower house committee to report within months how the promotion of low-carbon technologies can help revive NSW's economy as well as reducing its dependence on coal.

The five-member lower house Committee on Environment and Planning - three of whom are Liberal MPs - last week agreed to ask the government for the study of the employment and investment opportunities that can be generated by the renewable energy sector and a shift to a low-carbon economy.

Alex Greenwich, the independent MP who is also chair of the committee, said the workforce and economic opportunities from accelerating the take-up of wind and solar energy would be "critical" for the state's rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/finance-news/2020/05/05/jobs-renewables-clean-energy-council/>

### **Clean Energy Council unveils plan to create 50,000 jobs in renewables**

*New Daily, 05/05/2020*

Bringing forward the current pipeline of wind and solar projects will create more than 50,000 jobs and inject \$50 billion worth of investment into the ailing economy, according to the Clean Energy Council.

The industry group said that accelerated investment in renewable energy could power Australia's economic recovery on the other side of the coronavirus.

It said bringing forward approved projects could also lower power bills, help Australia become a "clean energy superpower", and create jobs in regional communities that are normally left behind.

The industry group argues that taxpayers do not need to carry the full financial burden of the projects, as private investors have a big appetite for investment in renewables.

It says the key is to pass smart regulatory reforms that "unblock massive pent-up private investment".

Channelling money into these areas "will provide steady, secure and value-adding employment in Australia" over the long term, the council says in its report.

"Clean energy is one of the very few industries that can deliver strong economic growth while reducing Australia's carbon footprint and delivering on Australia's international commitments," the council argues.

"The economic recovery from COVID-19 is an opportunity for A Clean Recovery to set Australia on a pathway

to meeting its 2030 emissions commitments."

The council argues that "A Clean Recovery" should also:

Develop a national home battery program

Offer incentives to small businesses and new homes that want to "go solar"

Switch government and community buildings to solar and batteries, and commit government agencies to 100% renewables

Build 21st-century transmission and distribution networks and an electric-vehicle charging network

Support investment in large-scale energy storage and encourage the development of offshore wind energy

Help major energy customers secure low-cost supply and become globally competitive

Establish Australia's renewable hydrogen capability.

## **FOSSIL POLITICS**

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/taylor-department-refuse-to-release-findings-of-expert-panel-into-emissions-reductions-84823/>

### **Taylor, department refuse to release findings of 'expert panel' into emissions reductions**

*Michael Mazengarb, Renew Economy, 20/04/2020*

Federal energy and emissions reduction minister Angus Taylor and a key government department have both refused to release the findings of an 'expert panel' into emissions reductions policy that will likely shape the Morrison government's climate and energy policies.

Separate freedom of information requests, submitted to the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources and to the office of federal energy minister Angus Taylor by RenewEconomy to access the findings were both refused, with each stating that the expert panel's findings were subject to an exemption, as documents destined for cabinet consideration.

The expert panel headed by former Origin Energy CEO and Business Council of Australia chair Grant King was formed in late 2019 and was tasked by Taylor with identifying new opportunities for the government to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

The department confirmed that a report had been delivered to the minister, totalling 96 pages, but insisted

that the release of the expert panel's findings will be entirely up to the discretion of the energy minister as it was a matter for cabinet consideration.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/apr/30/cashed-up-activists-should-not-be-able-to-hold-up-developments-keith-pitt-says>

**'Cashed-up activists' should not be able to hold up developments, Australia's resources minister says**

Lisa Cox, Guardian, 30/04/2020

The federal minister for resources, water and northern Australia, Keith Pitt, says "cashed-up activists" should not be able to hold up developments that have been approved by a government agency "simply because they can afford to".

In an interview, Pitt said Australia had "some of the strongest environmental protections in the world" and the government had "no intention to change how strongly we protect the environment". But he said a review of Australia's environmental laws needed to consider how assessment processes could be "streamlined" for companies developing major projects.

Pitt's comments follow the environment minister, Sussan Ley, saying last week the government was prepared to make changes to national environmental laws before former consumer watchdog head Graeme Samuel completes an independent review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/03/trouble-with-gas-the-coalition-is-betting-on-the-fossil-fuel-for-recovery-but-the-sums-dont-add-up>

**Trouble with gas: the Coalition is betting on the fossil fuel for recovery – but the sums don't add up**

Adam Morton, Guardian, 03/05/2020

The agency that runs Australia's electricity last week gave its verdict on how to deliver what would have seemed fanciful not that long ago – a

power grid that within five years should at times be able to run on 75% wind and solar energy.

The Australian Energy Market Operator delivered a report on integrating renewable energy into the system with an optimistic message.

As described by its chief, New Yorker Audrey Zibelman, the technical capacity was already there, but markets and regulations would have to be adjusted. There were no "insurmountable reasons" why the grid could not take even higher levels of renewables, as it will need to for Australia to meet the Paris agreement goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions.

The minister in charge of both energy and cutting emissions, Angus Taylor, chose a different emphasis.

In a statement issued as the study was released, Taylor said it had highlighted the challenges of increased amounts of solar and wind given the system needed continuous inertia – support from constantly running "synchronous

generation" – to ensure grid stability. He suggested that inertia could come from gas-fired power.

The price of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in Asia crashed by nearly two-thirds, prompting the industry to shelve decisions on tens of billions of dollars worth of proposed investments in export projects. Consultancy EnergyQuest has projected a 40% fall in revenue from the \$50bn LNG industry, which has driven most of the increase in national emissions in recent years.

Analysts at BloombergNEF found solar and wind are now the cheapest source of bulk electricity generation for at least two-thirds of the global population, Australia included.

Meanwhile, Australia's biggest oil and gas companies, Woodside Petroleum and Santos, are under siege from shareholders concerned about the financial risk of them backing long-term investments at odds with a zero emissions world.



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