



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 3:22 • 12 MAY 2020

New coal and News Corp

Report and documentary reveals extent of disinformation and climate-destroying projects approved during Black Summer bushfires

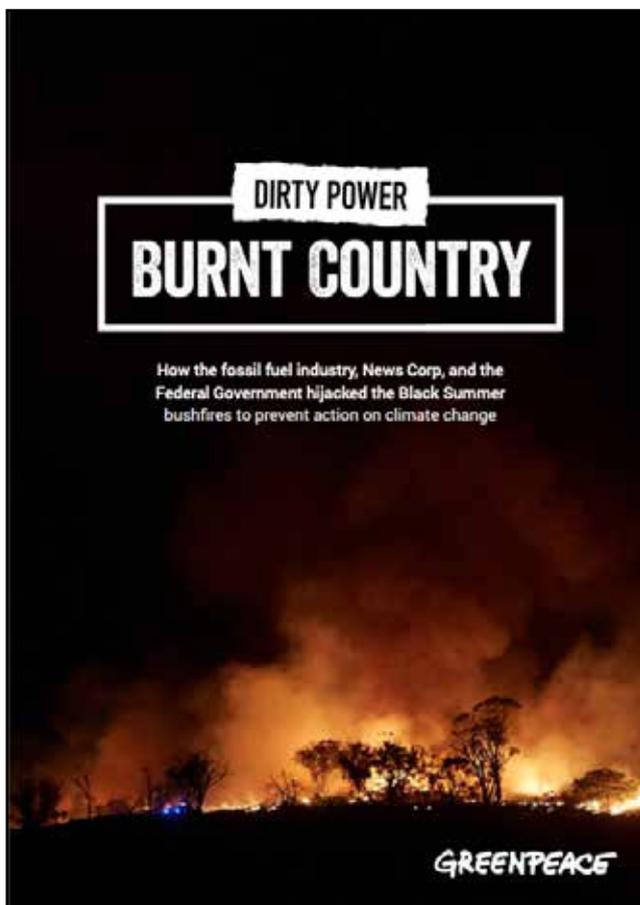
A new Greenpeace investigation has revealed that as Australia burned during the Black Summer bushfires, News Corp's reporting drove a viral misinformation campaign to protect the fossil fuel industry, while over 100 million tonnes of new coal extraction was approved by Federal and State governments.

The Dirty Power: Burnt Country investigation revealed that through a network of influence spanning the coal industry, the Coalition government, and News Corp, the influence of climate change on Australia's Black Summer bushfires was deliberately covered up to the advantage of the fossil fuel industry.

"Even during a time of unprecedented coal-driven climate crisis, the fossil fuel industry still got its way by mobilising a dirty network of influence spanning Australian politics and media," said Dr Nikola Casule, head of Research & Investigations at Greenpeace Australia Pacific.

100 million tonnes of new coal approved as bushfires raged

The investigation reveals over 100 million tonnes of new coal extraction was approved during the bushfires,



as well as 352 MW of fossil gas power stations, and 7,000 km2 of new fossil fuel expansion areas opened up across New South Wales and Queensland.

"The most extraordinary part of all this is, despite fossil fuels being the main driver of this climate-fuelled bushfire crisis, the industry itself walked away

not only unscathed but with a scandalous amount of new projects approved," said Dr Casule.

The investigation has also found that during the bushfires, News Corp-owned publications repeatedly attacked public figures who spoke out about climate change, and consistently produced more articles falsely attributing the bushfires to a lack of hazard reduction burning and arson than other media organisations.

News Corp publications also produced 75% of all articles that denied the influence of climate change, despite publishing only 46% of all articles on climate change and the bushfires.

A clear link between articles published by News Corp and the #ArsonEmergency online misinformation campaign was also revealed by the investigation, with commentary and opinion pieces published by News Corp driving spikes in

online activity on the hashtag.

"It is well-established that climate change drives more severe fire seasons, and the biggest driver of climate change is the burning of coal," said Dr Casule.

• Continued p2

• P2: Energy demand not much impacted by C-19

• P3: Centennial Coal's dodgy emissions figures

P5: The week's fossil news

Pandemic impact on electricity emissions minimal

While the COVID-19 pandemic response has led to massively reduced emissions by the transport sector, new research shows the same cannot be said for the electricity sector – which has only seen a slight decrease in emissions over the past month – confirming the need for strong structural and legislative reforms to reduce emissions in the electricity sector.

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

Key Points

- From 16 March 2020 when major lockdowns and closures began to 21

New coal and News Corp

• Continued from p1

“While families fled, fires blazed, and koalas burned alive, the disinformation peddled by the Federal Government, NewsCorp, bots, and trolls was straight out of the coal industry’s playbook.”

“The influence of the fossil fuel industry, through money and connections to the Federal Government and News Corp, has secured policies and actions that put the mining and burning of coal, gas, and oil above all else, even the safety of Australian families.”

“Had the sheer volume of disinformation published not occurred, the fossil fuel industry may not have gotten away with continuing to lobby and push for bushfire-driving projects to be approved.”

“It is clear that until the grip of the fossil fuel industry over Australia’s government and media is broken, federal action on climate change will remain elusive, putting Australians at greater risk of facing another Black Summer in years to come.”

• Download the report:

https://www.greenpeace.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Dirty-Power-Burnt-Country_Report_FINAL.pdf

• View the 15-minute documentary:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FjmlNo-Ai8&feature=youtu.be&utm_campaign=fossil-fuels&utm_source=dp2-media&utm_medium=referral



April 2020, electricity consumption was 2.4% lower than in the corresponding period in 2019 and 2.5% cent lower than in 2018.

- The period from mid-March to mid-April was significantly warmer in both 2019 and 2018 than this year. While reduced economic activity may have contributed to the reduction, it was certainly not the only causal factor, contributing about 1% in each year.
- Gas use has remained stable with electricity, manufacturing and LNG production accounting for over 70% of total gas consumption in eastern Australia and facing relatively little impact from the pandemic response.
- Coal generators and retailers are reportedly using the COVID-19 health crisis to lobby to slow down reforms to the NEM that would allow renewable energy and demand response to compete against them.

“Given the disruptive nature of the pandemic and its effect on sectors like transport, it might surprise some that the carbon emissions from electricity – the most polluting sector in Australia – have been so small,” said Dr Hugh Saddler, author of The Australia Institute’s National Energy Emissions Audit.

Higher household demand

“With most Australians ‘grounded’ transport emissions have dropped significantly but major electricity and gas users are still operating as per usual, and there is higher household demand.”

“In the last 12 months renewables have performed strongly and on Easter Saturday, renewables generated half of Australia’s electricity for nearly two hours, an impressive new milestone



that has only been achieved for a few minutes in the past.”

“Unfortunately, some coal generators and retailers are using this health crisis to lobby and slow down much needed reforms to the NEM. Over the long-term this will harm consumers, slow down economic recovery and hinder the growth of clean energy and emissions reduction,” said Richie Merzian, Climate & Energy Program Director at The Australia Institute.

“Australia’s electricity sector provides an incredibly valuable opportunity to stimulate the economy and reduce emissions; however, it is abundantly clear that more fossil fuel extraction and use cannot achieve either of these goals as effectively as renewables.”



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Centennial Coal vastly underestimates carbon emissions from major mine projects over 10 years

The company that supplies a third of the coal burned in NSW has under-estimated by up to 97% the carbon emissions associated with its mines, research by the Nature Conservation Council has found.

Analysis of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIS) submitted by Centennial Coal to the NSW Planning Department over 10 years shows a pattern of massive underestimation of Scope 3 emissions. (See below for an explanation of Scope 3 emissions.)

Just last month, the company submitted an environmental assessment for its Angus Place Coal Mine Expansion near Lithgow that underestimated Scope 3 emissions by 97%.

Dodgy CO2 calculations

Calculating downstream (scope 3) emissions from mines is pretty straightforward. Every tonne of NSW black coal burned generates 2.4 tonnes of carbon dioxide. To estimate the emissions of a mine's output, you simply multiply the tonnes of coal coming out by 2.4. But Centennial Coal consultants have been using factors as low as 0.08, 0.23, and 0.81.

"We have written to the Planning Department asking it to investigate whether an offence has been committed under the EP&A Act by reporting incorrect information," said Nature Conservation Council Chief Executive Chris Gambian.

"Providing misleading information in an EIS process is an offence under the EP&A Act, with a maximum penalty of \$1 million for corporations and \$250,000 for individuals. [1]

"The Angus Place EIS rang alarm bells so we looked more closely at documents the company had submitted in support of its other coal projects.

"We were shocked to find Centennial



Centennial Coal's Myuna colliery. Photo: Centennial Coal

had submitted incorrect greenhouse reports on five of its projects, three of which have already been approved.

"A similar error occurred across reports prepared by three different environmental consultants used by Centennial Coal from 2010 to 2020.

"The coal company used these incorrect numbers to claim its climate impacts were negligible.

"In reality, these coal mines are contributing significantly to the mounting loss of life and property from extreme bushfires, floods and heat waves.

Time to account for climate impacts

"It's time to start accounting for climate impacts properly and stop opening and expanding coal mines.

"These errors follow revelations that coal industry consultants have been routinely falsifying coal quality reports. Earlier it was revealed a whopping 45% to 50% of export

coal quality certificates issued by consultancy ALS Ltd since 2007 were falsified. [2]

"At the same time, the coal lobby has been pressuring the government to remove downstream emissions considerations from the NSW planning process altogether — an omission that would severely hinder planning authorities from assessing the full impacts of coal mines."

Scope 3 emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions are categorised into three 'scopes': Scope 1 emissions are produced directly by the activity of a business; Scope 2 are produced indirectly as a result of the consumption of electricity etc. by the business; and Scope 3 emissions arise along the value chain associated with a business but are not produced by that business. In the context of coal mines, Scope 3 emissions are mostly generated when the coal is burned by the end user.

ADANI WATCH

The Bob Brown Foundation has set up Adani Watch, following the international activities and human rights transgressions of Adani. See it here:

adaniwatch-bobbrownfoundation.nationbuilder.com



STOP WATER MINING

THE NEXT
RESOURCES BATTLE

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Inside the news

Scientists have documented the corrupt approval process for the **Adani** mine (p5) in a long article on *The Conversation*. It's well worth a click through to read this one.

The dangers of coal mining are highlighted by an explosion at an **Anglo-American** coal mine near Moranbah, which critically injured five miners (p5). There have been seven mining deaths in Queensland since 2017.

Whitehaven Coal has been fined \$120,000 for setting the Narrabri tip on fire last year (p5).

Westernport residents are still fighting **AGL** over a plan to build a gas import terminal (p6) and their local MP, **Greg Hunt**, is supportive of their efforts.

The Federal government continues to hand out money to the fossil fuel industry by putting a million dollars into a **renewable methane** plant at Wallumbilla in Queensland (p6). It might be produced using renewables, but methane is a powerful greenhouse gas that leaks at every stage of use, so **FFB** thinks the government should just get on with support for wind and solar projects.

Meanwhile, the **Greens** have warned that the Morrison government's overhaul of the **Clean Energy Finance Corporation** is a trojan horse for coal and gas (p7). Don't let the virus distract you from watching fossil foolery!

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In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 8,700 words of news for your convenience. [Click on the links](#) to view original articles. (Subscriptions may be required)

THE ADANI SAGA

<https://theconversation.com/australia-listened-to-the-science-on-coronavirus-imagine-if-we-did-the-same-for-coal-mining-138212>

Australia listened to the science on coronavirus. Imagine if we did the same for coal mining

Matthew Currell, Adrian Werner, Chris McGrath & Dylan Irvine, *The Conversation*, 12/05/2020

Australia's relative success in stopping the spread of COVID-19 is largely due governments taking expert advice on a complex problem. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of decisions on projects that threaten the environment – most notably, Adani's Carmichael coal mine.

Our research published today in *Nature Sustainability* documents how state and federal governments repeatedly ignored independent scientific advice when assessing and approving the Adani mine's groundwater plans.

Our analysis shows governments failed to compel Adani to fully investigate the environmental risks posed by its water plans, despite concerns raised by scientists.

There is also evidence the government approval decisions were influenced by the political climate and pressure exerted by members of government.

COAL ROCKS ON

<https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/6738439/narrabri-coal-fined-120000-for-dumping-hazardous-waste-epa/>

Whitehaven Coal fined \$120,000 for dumping hazardous waste: EPA

Andrew Messenger, *Northern Daily Leader*, 20/05/2020

Narrabri Coal has been fined \$120,000 for allegedly transporting hazardous waste that later sparked a series of fires at the local tip.

The NSW Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) confirmed the Whitehaven Coal subsidiary will fork out the money as part of an enforceable undertaking after the breaches last year.

The fine relates to a number of fires at the Narrabri Shire Council landfill in early to mid April last year, which the EPA said was caused by safety gear

Galilee Blockade has been urging followers to call insurance brokers Marsh and tell them not to find insurance for Adani's Carmichael Mine. Graphic: Galilee Blockade

improperly dumped by the mining giant.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-11/independent-inquiry-investigate-moranbah-mine-explosion-qld/12235272>

Moranbah coal mine explosion to be investigated by 'expert' independent board of inquiry

Stephanie Zillman, *ABC*, 11/05/2020

An independent panel of experts will be appointed to examine what led to a gas explosion at the Anglo-American Grosvenor coal mine near Moranbah, south-west of Mackay in North Queensland last week.

Key points:

- The board of inquiry is to recommend a suite of reforms that would significantly improve worker safety;
- There has been seven deaths at mine sites since 2017, including five since

the start of 2019;

- It is expected the board would return an interim report by August.

The explosion critically injured five workers, who remain in hospital in Brisbane.

<https://www.northernstar.com.au/news/miners-fighting-for-life-after-explosion/4010360/>

Miners fighting for life after explosion

Melanie Whiting, Tara Miko & Jack McKay, *ABC*, 07/05/2020

Five miners were last night fighting for their lives after a major explosion at a central Queensland underground coal mine in one of the biggest accidents to rock the industry in recent years.

An ignition of gas is believed to have caused the explosion underground at Anglo American's Grosvenor Mine near Moranbah about 3.15pm on Wednesday.

Paramedics were called to treat the five people in a serious condition with significant burns to their bodies before they were rushed to Moranbah Hospital. The injured patients were flown by RACQ Life-Flight Rescue air ambulance jets to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, arriving late last night.

<https://www.afr.com/policy/energy-and-climate/coal21-to-drop-the-coal-in-emissions-rebrand-20200510-p54rj4>

Coal21 to drop the 'coal' in emissions rebrand

Peter Ker, AFR, 11/05/2020

The coal industry's \$550 million emissions reduction fund will undergo a rebranding process, continuing the major overhaul forced by big members like BHP and Yancoal.

Miners in NSW and Queensland donate 8¢ to Coal21 Limited every time they export a tonne of coal, under an agreement struck in 2006 to invest in reducing the emissions generated by the fossil fuel.

But several of Coal21's members became concerned with the group's priorities between 2015 and 2018, particularly its funding of pro-coal adverts like the "amazing little black rock" campaign that appeared on national television in 2015.

ASIC filings suggested Coal21's name would be changed to "Low Emissions Technologies Australia Limited", but two further derivations of that name were also reserved with the corporate regulator.

Chief executive Mark McCallum said work on a rebranding continued a big year for Coal21.

"Our mission is to work with members to invest in technology that reduces emissions in line with the goals of the Paris agreement, and we are looking for a name that better

OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-07/queensland-coal-and-gas-exploration-coronavirus/12220636>

Resources industry to receive coronavirus boost with land release for coal and gas exploration in Queensland

Jemima Burt & Melissa Maykin, ABC, 07/05/2020

Almost 7,000 square kilometres of land will be released for coal and gas exploration as part of a raft of measures to ensure the survival of the resources sector through the coronavi-

rus pandemic, the Queensland Government has announced.

Queensland Mines Minister Dr Anthony Lynham said, "When coronavirus eventually leaves us we need the exploration sector to lead the economy out of the mire.

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/victoria/victoria-urged-to-halt-agl-s-floating-gas-terminal-approval-bid-20200506-p54qdf.html>

Victoria urged to halt AGL's floating gas terminal approval bid

Nick Toscano & Miki Perkins, Age, 07/05/2020

Western Port residents have launched an urgent appeal for the Victorian government to push back an assessment of AGL's contentious plan for a floating gas import terminal at Crib Point until after coronavirus lockdowns have ended.

The energy giant's plan to locate a liquefied natural gas terminal in the bay and connect it to a 55-kilometre pipeline from the Mornington Peninsula to Pakenham has faced delays and a bitter backlash from environmental groups and residents worried about the potential risks to the area's ecosystems and tourism.

AGL chief Brett Redman this week urged the government to consider fast-tracking the approvals process for the \$250 million project in order to stimulate desperately needed jobs and economic activity as Victoria re-emerges from the crippling coronavirus crisis.

Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt, whose electorate takes in the region, also said he did not support "any shortcuts" on the assessment.

But community groups such as Save Westernport fear it could negatively affect marine life, Ramsar-listed wetlands and tourism and fishing industries.

Bron Gwyther, a French Island resident, said the island's 120 inhabitants were more isolated than the rest of the Victorian community. Some had patchy internet access, some used mobile phones to "hot spot" and others did not have access at all, making online consultation challenging, she said.

"You can't consult with French Island via Zoom," she said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/global-lng-costs/rpt-virus-lockdowns-pummel-global-gas-demand-force-lng-output-cuts-idUSL4N2CPTK>

RPT-Virus lockdowns pummel global gas demand, force LNG output cuts

Jessica Jaganathan, Scott DiSavino & Sonali Paul, Reuters, 08/05/2020

Lockdowns to slow the coronavirus pandemic are pummelling gas demand in the world's biggest buyers of liquefied natural gas (LNG), pushing Asia's spot prices to record lows and forcing some suppliers to start cutting output.

Economies worldwide have ground to a halt as virus containment measures have taken their toll, slashing gas demand for power generation, heating, cooking, vehicles and chemical manufacture. The world's biggest LNG markets – Japan, China, South Korea and India – are all seeing a drop in demand.

Beyond high-cost US producers, some Australian coal-bed methane projects are also likely to face acute pressure to cut supply.

Australia's coal-seam gas (CSG) projects have some of the highest output costs in the world, although Australia Pacific LNG (APLNG) and Santos Ltd say they have slashed their CSG costs in recent years.

APLNG partner Origin Energy said it sells most of its output in long-term contracts, with a small percentage going via pipeline to Australia's east coast or to Asia as spot LNG.

The joint venture - owned by ConocoPhillips, Sinopec and Origin - is considering whether to trim spot volumes. This would entail cutting output from the CSG wells, not shutting down a train at APLNG.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-08/renewable-gas-plant-for-western-downs/12227516>

'Coffee-table'-sized units to power new gas plant near Roma

David Chen, ABC, 08/05/2020

The Federal Government will provide more than \$1 million dollars in funding to help build a new renewable gas plant near Roma in south west Queensland.

APA Group and Southern Green Gas will build the demonstration plant at Wallumbilla which is expected to convert hydrogen into around 74 gigajoules of renewable methane.

The funding, through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), will give authorities the chance to

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assess the benefits of using an electrolyser powered by solar panels to extract hydrogen from the atmosphere, which is then turned into methane.

Southern Green Gas managing director Rohan Gillespie said work on the plant was expected to begin late next year.

The Federal Energy Minister Angus Taylor said the project could help decarbonize the gas industry.

“This type of innovative work is exactly what we need to see to grow our domestic hydrogen industry,” he said.

HYDROGEN HYPE

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/federal/crucial-2-million-renewable-hydrogen-energy-trial-in-queensland-20200507-p54qu5.html>

'Crucial' \$2 million renewable hydrogen energy trial in Queensland

Mike Foley, 08/05/2020

Innovative energy technology will be trialled by APA Group under a \$2.2 million project at Wallumbilla, near Roma in Queensland, investigating the commercial potential of feeding a renewable power source into the natural gas pipeline network.

The Morrison government, through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), will invest \$1.1 million in a modular demonstration plant to produce hydrogen, which will be converted into renewable methane.

The methane can be injected into APA Group's east coast gas pipeline network, which federal Energy and Emissions Reduction Minister Angus Taylor said could help decarbonise power supplies.

Methane will be generated using solar-generated electricity, water and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, which can then be stored in existing natural gas pipelines.

Renewable solar energy will power an electrolyser that “splits” water into oxygen and hydrogen. The hydrogen will then be converted to methane by a

reaction with carbon dioxide, which is also extracted directly from the atmosphere using renewable energy.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/may/11/green-steel-industry-could-secure-jobs-future-for-australia-as-coalmining-heartland>

Green steel industry could secure jobs future for Australia's coalmining heartland

Adam Morton, Guardian, 11/05/2020

A new Australian green steel industry could create tens of thousands of jobs in regional areas reliant on coalmining, particularly in central Queensland and the Hunter Valley, giving them a future as demand for carbon-intensive goods falls.

That is the conclusion of a report by the Grattan Institute, a thinktank linked to the University of Melbourne, which examined claims Australia has the potential to become a green energy “superpower”.

Assessing the viability of clean manufacturing possibilities, the institute found green steel made with renewable hydrogen could become a multi-billion-dollar export industry employing 25,000 people in regions likely to be hardest hit by global steps to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Rather than exporting renewable hydrogen, the analysis found the most economically viable path appeared to be to use it within Australia to produce steel with near-zero emissions. “Green steel” is created using hydrogen to trigger a chemical reaction with the oxygen in iron ore to create iron metal and water. The metal is then refined and cast into steel.

Hydrogen-based direct reduction of iron ore is not yet commercial, but the report says it is based on a proven technology involving gas.

FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/08/greens-warn-clean-energy-finance-corporation-overhaul-a-trojan-horse-for-coal-and-gas>

Greens warn Clean Energy Finance Corporation overhaul a 'Trojan horse for coal and gas'

Katharine Murphy & Adam Morton, Guardian, 08/05/2020

The Greens say a move by the Morrison government to overhaul the legislation underpinning the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to allow new investments in power grid reliability must be opposed, because it is a “Trojan horse for coal and gas”.

Federal parliament is set to resume next week. The government proposes to amend the Clean Energy Finance Corporation Act to enable the CEFC to establish and administer a \$1bn grid reliability fund, and to create a special account for the initiative. The current legislation rules out investments by the CEFC in coal and gas.

Labor is yet to take a position on the proposal. A spokeswoman for the shadow climate change and energy minister, Mark Butler, says the opposition has asked the government for the draft legislation, but is yet to receive it.

The Greens leader, Adam Bandt, says the only reason for changing the existing legislation would be to open the door to help fund gas and coal.

In addition to the grid stability change, the government also proposes to change the investment mandate of the CEFC by directing it to make up to \$300m available for a new Advancing Hydrogen Fund as part of the national hydrogen strategy.

The change for hydrogen requires the government to table a legislative instrument to update the investment mandate to facilitate the new hydrogen fund, but the grid stability initiative will require an amendment to legislation.

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