



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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Coal and gas: job-poor industries

New analysis by the Australia Institute Climate & Energy Program finds that using the Covid-19 recovery funding to subsidise the gas industry would create few jobs, increase emissions and lock in higher energy prices.

Key Findings

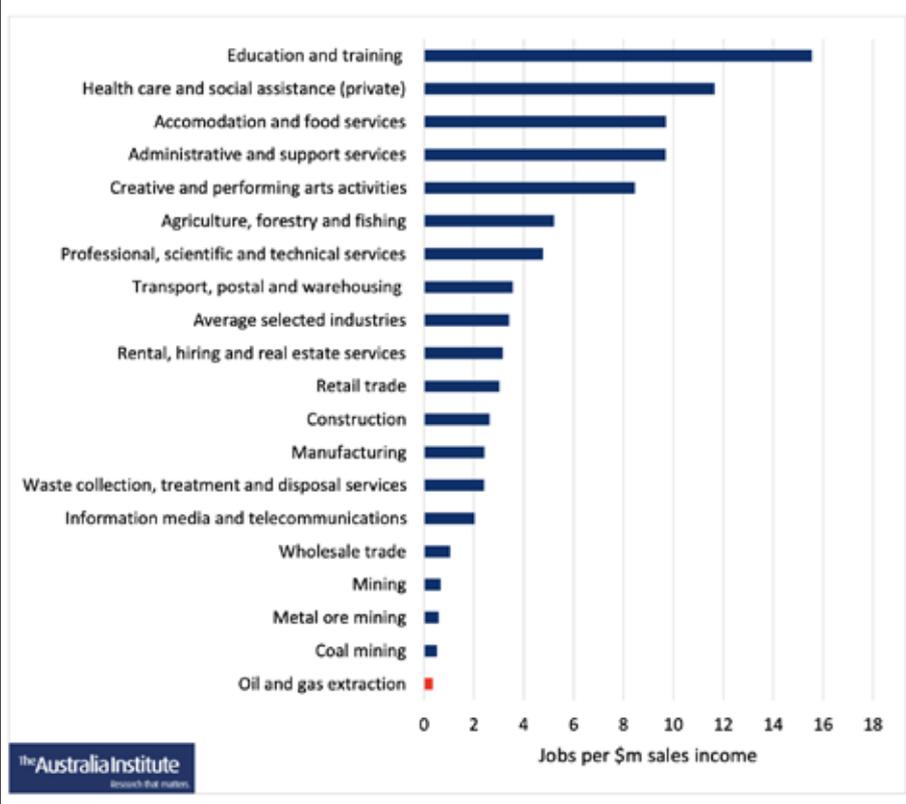
- Despite being the world's largest Liquefied Natural Gas exporter, less than 0.2% of Australia's workforce works in the gas industry, and the companies pay little if any tax.
- The gas industry is among the most capital intensive, job poor industries in Australia (see Figure 1, right).
- Subsidising gas will displace lower cost renewables and lock Australia into higher energy prices and higher emissions for decades to come.
- Recovery funding gives Australian manufacturing with a unique opportunity to shift to electrification of many processes, providing clean, efficient, cheaper and more reliable alternatives.

Capital intensive, jobs poor

"Spending recovery funds on a capital intensive, jobs poor industry like gas completely defeats the purpose of a recovery program, virtually any other industry would be likely to create more jobs," said Richie Merzian, Climate & Energy Program Director at the Australia Institute.

"Australia's Covid recovery, and the climate, would be better served by investment in renewables – which are far cheaper and cleaner than gas – not squandering public money on a so-called 'gas fired' recovery.

Figure 1: Job intensity of selected Australian industries (jobs per \$m sales income)



"Gas supply has tripled in the last decade and yet domestic gas prices on the East Coast have only increased, evidence that higher gas supply does not automatically equal lower electricity prices.

"Locking Australians into gas by building new infrastructure is short sighted, will end up costing Australian energy consumers more money, and ignores the other crisis at hand, climate change," Merzian said.

• Download the report here:

https://www.tai.org.au/sites/default/files/P908%20Gas-fired%20backfire%20%5Bweb%5D_0.pdf

Santos

IPC hears from over 400 people

• Special IPC hearings round-up p8-11

• Frydenberg, Roberts in Santos 'done deal' while laughing at opponents: p9

• P2: Covid commission pushes for gas expansion

• P3: IEEFA tells IPC of gas-fired depression

P4: Fire and water issues at Narrabri

Fossil-fuelled Covid commission pushes massive tax-payer supported gas industry expansion

Scott Morrison's fossil-fuel loaded National Covid-19 Coordination Commission (NCCC) has just recommended a massive, tax-payer subsidised expansion of the country's destructive gas industry.

When an early draft of the commission's report was leaked to the media in May, NCCC chairman Neville Power distanced himself from it, alleging the report did not reflect the NCCC's position.

And yet, a presentation from the NCCC seen recently by the Nine newspapers, substantially reflects the earlier draft.

The Age and the *Sydney Morning Herald* report that the NCCC calls for "cutting red and green tape" to help the gas industry rapidly increase gas extraction and create up to 170,000 manufacturing jobs. It also recommends tax incentives for the construction of gas infrastructure and letting pipeline owners charge higher prices.

"Among the projects that will benefit from the report's recommendations, the presentation says, are controversial new developments such as the proposed Narrabri Gas Project, which locals fear could damage surrounding agricultural communities' groundwater.

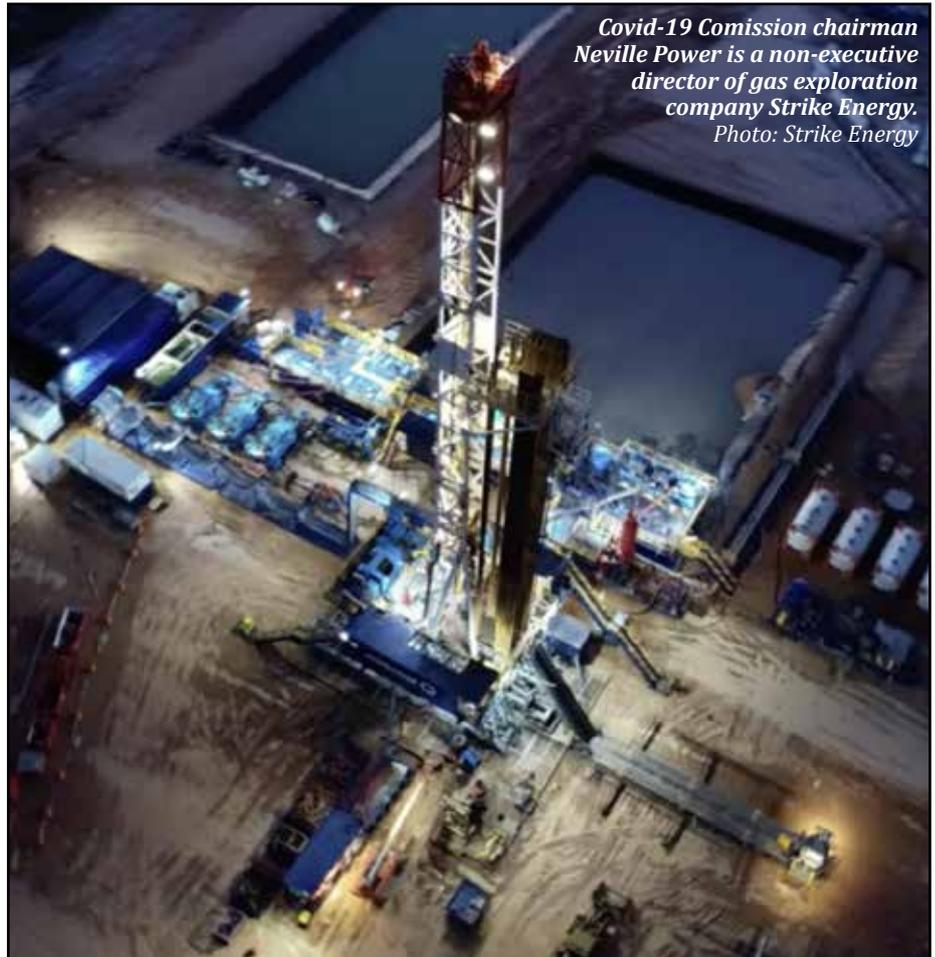
"One of the taskforce's primary recommendations is that the Commonwealth underwrite gas demand so new projects have a guaranteed buyer. Government would group together multiple smaller gas users and if they did not consume all the supply, the government would pay for it," say the newspapers.

Gas exec pushes gas interests

Neville Power is on the board of gas explorer Strike Energy, although he hasn't attended Strike board meetings since the potential conflict of interest was highlighted by journalists.

On Tuesday, Scott Morrison announced some new members for the Covid-19 commission and made it an advisory board to cabinet, meaning much of its advice would fall under cabinet confidentiality rules.

The Guardian reports the new members are retired career banker Mike Hirs; the former chief financial officer



*Covid-19 Commission chairman Neville Power is a non-executive director of gas exploration company Strike Energy.
Photo: Strike Energy*

of Transurban, Samantha Hogg; rural and regional advocate Su McCluskey; food franchise entrepreneur Bao Hoang; Indigenous businesswoman Laura Berry and KPMG partner and former union official Paul Howes.

"The government said the commission would sit as an advisory council inside Morrison's portfolio. As well as Power and other commission members, the group has a chief executive, Peter Harris, and seconded staff of about 20 officials.

"Morrison will commission advice from the group, and the group may also be called in to advise the government on initiatives being developed across portfolios relating to the economic recovery from the pandemic.

"Some of the preliminary advisory material may be able to be accessed under freedom of information laws, but any advice given to inform a cabinet deliberation will be kept confidential," *The Guardian* said.

Meanwhile, Greg Combet has stepped down from the NCCC and kept silent

on his reasons for doing so. Catherine Tanna will also be stepping down at an unspecified date.

Unelected, unaccountable and secretive

The NCCC's work is conducted in secret, amid concerns of conflict of interest and lack of accountability.

Meanwhile, Parliament is suspended and the country's future direction is being controlled by unelected business tycoons behind closed doors.

Grattan Institute energy director Tony Wood said, "There is not one mention that gas is a fossil fuel and we are supposed to be heading towards a low-emissions economy. How can you seriously consider a gas strategy that doesn't deal with that?"

Research from the Australia Institute shows the NCCC's gas plans are unlikely to even generate many jobs. But the government's fossil fuel sponsors will certainly reap benefits.

Independent Planning Commission hears over 400 presentations on Santos' Narrabri gasfield

By Bruce Robertson, IEEFA

The controversial Narrabri gas project for New South Wales, Australia enters the final stages of approval with over 400 people presenting to the Independent Planning Commission who will determine its fate.

The project is the most hotly contested resource project in the history of the state with over 23,000 submissions, 98% of which objected to the project.

While queueing up to be heard, there was another queue forming.

Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) tankers in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans are motoring in circles while they wait to find a market for their unwanted product. Gas is currently being almost given away on international markets.

The very last thing the world needs is more gas.

Far from seeing the "gas powered recovery" our politicians desire, we are seeing a gas fired depression around the globe. In the US, the number of operating drill rigs has fallen 73% in the last 12 months. And US LNG exports have more than halved so far in 2020.

Deloitte estimates that almost a third of US shale producers are technically insolvent at current oil prices.

Domestically, the industry is faring little better. On Tuesday, Santos, the proponent of the Narrabri gas project, wrote off a further \$950m from its failed Coal Seam Gas to Liquefied Natural investments in Australia. Their total write-downs since 2014 are close to \$8bn!

Globally, renewables continue to overwhelm new fossil fuel and nuclear power station builds.

Since 2010 renewables have grown by approximately 148% whilst nuclear plus fossil fuels have declined by 38%.

This year alone, 200 gigawatts of renewable power plants have already been built, compared to only 100 gigawatts of fossil fuel energies and nuclear.

Less gas power plants have been built in 2020 than in 2001.

Investors are fleeing the gas industry and investment is flooding into renewables.

The NSW government recently announced its tender for 3 gigawatts of power projects for its Central Renewable Energy Zone near Dubbo. The response was overwhelming with the tender being nine times over-subscribed.

Gas is not a transition fuel

In Australia, gas usage in gas-fired power plants has declined by 59% since 2014 whilst renewables have increased to produce 25% of the energy in the National Electricity Market.

The AEMO, the only agency to model a future electricity grid in its Integrated Systems Plan, has shown that in a renewables rich grid, the role of gas is smaller than it is today by 2040.

Gas peaking plants only contributed 1.8% of the National Electricity Market's generation in the year to April 2020 whilst they account for 13.4% of capacity. Put simply, we need capacity in gas peaking plants but they are never run for long. We don't need much gas to power them.

We are paying too much for gas

The east coast gas industry – which could be described as a cartel – has consistently set the prices for the Australian domestic consumer and our governments have allowed them to.

The ACCC has written report after report showing that Australians pay much more for gas than we should, and for substantial lengths of time we have paid more than our Japanese customers for Australian gas.

Cartels, incidentally, are an illegal market structure as is the price fixing that so clearly occurs.

The cost to the economy of price fixing has been immense. Not only has gas priced itself out of the electricity system, except for very niche peak power applications, it has also destroyed Australian gas intensive manufacturing. Gas use in manufacturing has fallen 12% since 2014.

Gas is the price setter in the National Electricity Market. For every \$1/GJ increase in the price of gas the price of electricity rises by \$11/MWh.

The effect of inflated gas prices on

electricity prices has impoverished Australian energy consumers.

Gas prices will rise not fall with the development of Narrabri

The average costs of production for developed gas fields on the east coast of Australia are \$3.05/GJ, according to Core Energy who were commissioned by AEMO.

Core Energy estimates that the Narrabri gas project will have costs at a minimum \$7.28/GJ.

Narrabri gas is high cost gas.

It is simply not possible to bring down the cost of a commodity by producing it at a high cost, as Santos will do at Narrabri. The proposition is absurd.

But we need the gas for industry

Many high heat applications for gas can be substituted with cheap renewable power. Some however cannot and so we need some gas production. The federal and NSW state governments have set the level of gas needed at 70PJ pa – somewhat conveniently this is the same production number as the Narrabri Gas project.

Gas use in residential and commercial applications can largely be substituted for cheaper electrical heating, in the form of air conditioners, induction cooking and heat pumps for hot water.

This would free up to 190PJ pa and dwarf the contribution from Narrabri.

The future is clear. Investment is flooding into renewable energy whilst the gas industry is contracting and bleeding red ink.

We should not continue to prop up a failing and loss-making gas industry. The Narrabri gas project should be rejected.

• Bruce Robertson is IEEFA's gas/LNG analyst based in Australia.

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IPC hears of fire hazard and risks to groundwater if Santos gets go-ahead in Narrabri gasfield

New risk analysis has found Santos' Narrabri gasfield Environmental Impact Statement has overlooked the likely intensification and prevalence of catastrophic bushfires and other weather extremes as a result of a warming climate.

In particular, the Climate Risk advice indicates that the 1 in 70 chance Santos' assessment estimates of the gasfield causing a bushfire during its life is increased to a 1 in 28 chance, given the effects of climate change on fire risk, creating "a reasonably high probability of the project starting a bushfire during its lifetime."

84 died in California gasfield ignition

The advice points to an example from California, where US based Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) pleaded guilty for causing the deaths of 84 people during an ignition caused during 2018 fires in California.

Previously, members of the NSW Rural Fire Service have expressed serious concerns about Santos' exemption from fire bans on catastrophic risk days, with the company able to flare methane or other gases whenever it chooses to, should the gasfield be approved.

Deputy captain of the Wynella rural fire service, which operates adjacent to the Pilliga, Dave Watt, said it was madness for a proposal like the Santos gasfield to be considered in light of the catastrophic fires that impacted NSW earlier this year and late last year.

Watt made a presentation to the Independent Planning Commission's public hearing into the Santos Narrabri gasfield last week.

"Under extreme conditions it is too dangerous to go into the Pilliga to fight a fire during the day and that's as it stands without the increased risk created by the gas project," Watt said.

"The Pilliga Forest is like a matchstick on catastrophic fire days already – it will only become more susceptible to inevitable fires as climate change intensifies.

"If the Santos gasfield goes ahead, it will not only be contributing to a warming climate, but will be located in a region that is set to greatly suffer due to more sweltering days, and lower

rainfall. These factors combined with open flame-flaring in a potentially bone-dry forest is sheer stupidity.

"People's lives, including those of Santos staff, will be placed at unacceptable risk if this gasfield is approved."

Risks to groundwater underestimated

The IPC also heard it appears likely Santos seriously underestimated risks to groundwater from the proposed Narrabri gasfield, with concerns critical data and information was overlooked in the company's environmental assessment.

Santos told the Water Expert Panel advising the Department of Planning on the gas field that, in general, "methane is observed at low and varying levels in all formations above the target formations, though the majority of groundwater samples from across the monitoring network do not record any hydrocarbons above the level of reporting."

Detailed baseline data showing methane levels in groundwater were missing from the project's environmental impact statement.

But a scientific paper published earlier this year found significant levels of methane in groundwater samples from aquifers overlying the coal seams, and data indicating geological structures provide pathways for gas movement into these aquifers.

The UNSW paper found there may be much greater connection between the coal seams and aquifers of the region than Santos and the government believe.

This would mean that if Santos's proposal is approved, there is significantly greater potential for cross-contamination of groundwater with gas, and leakage of water out of crucial aquifers, than currently assumed.

RMIT hydrologist Dr Matthew Currell, who spoke at the IPC Hearing, said: "Coal seam gas development poses significant groundwater risks in the Narrabri area, where high quality, high yielding aquifers support numerous water users and ecosystems.

"The area provides recharge for Australia's most important aquifer system – the Great Artesian Basin and is close

to the vitally important Namoi Alluvium. The risks of groundwater and surface contamination and drawdown are real.

"Santos's modelling and the department's assessment assume there is little or no connectivity between coal seams – where gas would be extracted – and critically important shallow aquifers. However, recent peer-reviewed research shows that major geological structures occur in the project area, providing pathways for flow of gas and water.

"This has major implications for future risks of cross-contamination and leakage from shallow aquifers in response to gas extraction. By failing to properly account for this in groundwater modelling, Santos has not presented a full and comprehensive account of the possible risks to groundwater from the Narrabri gas project.

"Santos has also failed to conduct thorough field-based studies of groundwater dependent ecosystems, inter-aquifer connectivity and groundwater recharge in the project area, despite expert advice urging them to do so in 2017."

The Department of Planning proposes requiring Santos to provide detailed baseline data on "natural methane leaks and accumulations" after the gasfield is approved, which has local landholders worried.

Narrabri farmer Sarah Ciesiolka, who relies on the shallow aquifers to farm, said letting the gas field proceed before understanding its groundwater impact left farmers exposed to serious risk.

"It is not fair for a company like Santos to come into this region with a plan to totally up-end our way of life, and not even do the required and necessary research. This is like giving a fox the keys to the henhouse because it promises it will clean up after itself," she said.

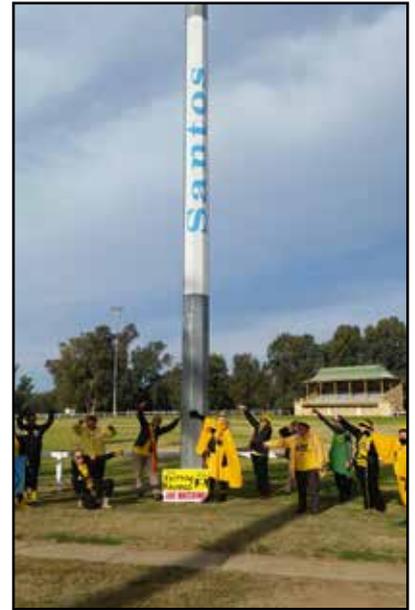
"We're not prepared to be guinea pigs so that Santos can make money first and answer questions later.

"I sincerely hope the IPC takes note of this UNSW report which casts doubt on Santos's studies and ultimately rejects the coal seam gas proposal."

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



Inside the news



The Knitting Nannas made their presence felt in Narrabri this week as the NSW Independent Planning Commission heard from many opponents of the proposed Santos Narrabri gasfield.

Few people spoke in favour of the project: mainly those who could see a dollar in it for themselves.

FFB has heard that, should the IPC give Santos the nod, there will be people putting themselves in the path of the drilling rigs to hinder progress.

Feelings are running high in north-west NSW, and let's not forget that farmers have already seen off pipeline contractors attempting to survey a route to get Santos gas to market.

APA has a Western Slopes Pipeline on its books, to link Santos to the Moomba gas hub.

An alternative is the Hunter Gas plan to run a pipeline to Newcastle, and also north to Queensland.

Either way, farmers are prepared to physically block access to their land.

Let's hope a battle of words before the IPC doesn't turn into a battle on the ground.

Meanwhile, Australia is looking terribly last century as the Covid-19 commission spruiks gas, and the Treasurer gets 1980s inspiration from Thatcher and Reagan.

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PROUD SUPPORTER OF
THE FOSSIL FOOL BULLETIN

f GreenPigeonGraphics gpg@bordnet.com.au

Print ✓ Mailchimp ✓ Social ✓ Web ✓

Fossil Fool Bulletin

Published by Eve Sinton
PO Box 555, Mullumbimby,
NSW 2482, Australia

f Fossil Fool Bulletin

M fossil.fool.bulletin@gmail.com
evesinton@gmail.com

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In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 26,920 words of news for your convenience. [Click on the links](#) to view original articles. (Subscriptions may be required)

THE ADANI SAGA

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/truecrimeaustralia/police-courts/antiadani-activist-fails-in-appeal-over-tripod-stunt/news-story/1a37418a13f4c2018b7c28e6bef082>

Anti-Adani activist in appeal over tripod stunt

Kay Dibben, *Courier-Mail*, 24/07/2020

An anti-Adani protester who sat on a tripod structure above a Queensland railway line claims he was not given a fair hearing before he was convicted of three offences last year.

Bowen magistrate Ron Muirhead in May last year found Greg Rolles, a former Victorian geography teacher, guilty of interfering with and trespassing on a Bowen Basin railway line in November 2018.

He also was found guilty of failing to comply with a police direction to remove himself from the railway line.

Rolles – who sat on top of a tripod structure he had erected in a protest to stop coal trains getting to the Adani-owned Abbot Point terminal – was fined a total of \$7,000.

He also was ordered to pay rail freight company Aurizon \$2,233 restitution.

Rolles' barrister Kylie Hillard asked Brisbane District Court judge Ray Rinaudo to quash his convictions and order a new magistrates court hearing of the charges.

Judge Rinaudo has reserved his decision on Rolles' appeal.

COAL ROCKS ON

<https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/6844518/bid-to-save-nsw-aboriginal-sites-dismissed/>

Bid to save NSW Aboriginal sites dismissed

Luke Costin, *Northern Daily Leader*, 22/07/2020

Laws created to provide meaningful protection to culturally significant Aboriginal sites are an "abject failure", according to the woman behind a failed bid to stop the destruction of sacred sites at a NSW coal mining site.

Gomeri woman Veronica "Dolly" Talbott argued federal Environment Minister Susan Ley made a legal error when deciding the potential economic and social benefits of the Shenhua Watermark open-cut coal mine on the Liverpool Plains outweighed the heritage value of the significant Aboriginal sites in its footprint.

Federal Court Justice Wendy Abraham dismissed the application and ordered Talbott pay up to \$1000 of the government's legal



Greg Rolles blocked a Bowen Basin railway line with a tripod in 2018, during an anti-Adani protest. Photo: contributed

costs. The Environmental Defenders Office, which backed Talbott's challenge, said the sites in the footprint of the mine included sacred places, significant ceremonial corridors and scarred trees irreplaceable to the Gomeri people.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/indigenous-owners-lose-bid-to-protect-land-earmarked-for-shenhua-mine-20200722-p55eip.html>

Indigenous owners lose bid to protect land earmarked for Shenhua mine

Jenny Noyes, *SMH*, 22/07/2020

An Aboriginal group has lost its bid to protect a culturally valuable site from being destroyed for the Shenhua coal mine in northern NSW, but says the fight to protect the area is not over.

Federal Court Judge Wendy Abraham dismissed the application for a judicial review of the Environment Minister's decision not to protect the Mount Watermark site near Gunnedah from the controversial open-cut mine.

The applicant, Veronica 'Dolly' Talbott, acting as a member of the Gomeri Traditional Custodians, had submitted that Environment Minister Susan Ley took into account an "irrelevant consideration" when she weighed the impact of the mine on Indigenous sites against perceived social and economic benefits to the local community.

In dismissing the application, Justice Abraham said the applicant had failed to establish that the social and economic impacts are irrelevant under the Heritage Act.

The judgment said Minister Ley had stated she "considered the expected social and

economic benefits of the Shenhua Watermark Coal Mine to the local community outweighed the impacts of the mine ... as a result of the likely destruction of parts of their Indigenous cultural heritage."

Talbott said the decision "demonstrates the abject failure of the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection] Act to provide meaningful protection for areas of particular significance to Aboriginal people."

She said the decision had not deterred Gomeri elders from continuing to seek protection for the area, and the group, which represents more than 600 Gomeri people and 31 Aboriginal nations, had made a new application to the Environment Minister to protect the area's sacred sites.

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/truecrimeaustralia/police-courts/new-acland-coal-bid-to-liquidate-oakey-coal-action-alliance-delayed-by-supreme-court/news-story/e2b370d67bdf6385df5a0a31948380d3>

New Acland Coal bid to liquidate Oakey Coal Action Alliance delayed by Supreme Court

Kay Dibben, *Courier-Mail*, 22/07/2020

The Oakey Coal Action Alliance has welcomed today's Supreme Court decision to delay a move by Queensland miner New Acland Coal to have the farming group liquidated.

Justice Peter Davis adjourned his decision on a New Acland Coal application to have OCAA wound up over a costs debt until after a High Court decision.

More than 60 landholders fighting the expansion of a coal mine on Queensland's

Darling Downs have been granted leave by the High Court to appeal a finding against them last year.

Since 2007, the Oakey Coal Action Alliance (OCAA) has been challenging plans by New Hope Group-owned New Acland Coal for a stage three expansion at the mine.

OCAA was ordered to pay costs to New Acland Coal (NAC) by the Court of Appeal in November 2019, when it dismissed their appeal.

New Acland has assessed OCAA's costs debt to be \$736,823.

Justice Davis, said OCAA owed a substantial debt and it appeared to be insolvent.

However, he said the making of a winding up order now would practically frustrate its High Court appeal.

He said New Acland Coal would suffer little in the way of prejudice by waiting until after the High Court decision and it could apply for security for the costs of that appeal.

OCAA secretary, Paul King, said with today's Supreme Court decision, there were now no obstacles preventing OCAA's High Court appeal.

He said it concerned the expansion of the stage three New Acland coal mine which, if approved, would "rip apart prime agricultural land and threaten underground water sources that sustain many farms".

"New Hope has tried to deny us justice and the company has failed."

OCAA president, Aileen Harrison said today's decision was a tremendous relief.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jul/24/shine-energy-invited-to-apply-for-collinsville-power-station-grant-two-days-after-securing-it>

Shine Energy invited to apply for Collinsville power station grant two days after securing it

Ben Smee, Guardian, 24/07/2020

The proponent of a coal-fired power station at Collinsville in north Queensland was asked to lodge an application for a \$4m feasibility study grant two days after it had already been publicly announced as the recipient.

The government's support for the project has broadly been considered a concession to pro-coal Nationals and an effective political wedge in Queensland coal country.

Guardian Australia has been investigating how Shine Energy managed to secure the grant of up to \$4m for a feasibility study, despite having no energy sector experience and having never completed a project.

An initial business case submitted by Shine in late 2018 did not meet the criteria to be shortlisted for the government's flagship power generation scheme, the Underwriting New Generation Investment program.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jul/24/collinsville-coal-fired-power-station-is-backed-by-big-mining-companies-queensland-lnp-says>

Collinsville coal-fired power station is backed by 'big mining companies', Queensland LNP says

Ben Smee, Guardian, 24/07/2020

The proposed Collinsville coal-fired power station is being backed by "big mining companies" and the Queensland Liberal National Party won't fund the project, the party's energy spokesman has said.

Michael Hart told a renewable energy forum in Brisbane on Thursday, organised by Solar Citizens and conservation groups, the LNP would not support any government investment in the controversial proposed power project.

Asked whether the LNP would back a coal-fired power station, Hart said the state already had "plenty of power".

"What is happening in Collinsville is we have some big mining companies there that say they can't buy electricity at a reasonable price so they are proposing to back a new coal-fired power station at Collinsville. Basically they'll take all the power off it."

Glencore was mentioned.

Hart's comments cast the Collinsville project – proposed by tiny start-up Shine Energy and backed by the federal Coalition with up to \$4m for a feasibility study – in a different light to the way it has previously been spoken about publicly.

OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.afr.com/street-talk/beetaloo-gas-play-tamboran-pitches-whopper-ipo-to-investors-20200721-p55dy3>

Beetaloo gas play Tamboran pitches whopper IPO to investors

Sarah Thompson, Anthony Macdonald & Tim Boyd, AFR, 21/07/2020

East coast gas market hopeful Tamboran Resources is in front of fund managers outlining the biggest mooted Australian oil and gas sector initial public offering in years.

Tamboran Resources is seeking to raise \$195 million in the coming six months to fund commitments across its three assets, including one jointly owned with local heavyweight Santos.

Tamboran has three assets in the McArthur Basin, within the Beetaloo sub-basin, which is located about 500 kilometres south of Darwin.

<https://www.theage.com.au/business/companies/santos-takes-1-1b-hit-as-covid-19-wipes-out-oil-demand-20200721-p55dwq.html>

Santos takes \$1.1b hit as COVID-19 wipes out oil demand

Nick Toscano, Age, 21/07/2020

Oil and gas giant Santos has become the latest Australian producer to take heavy write-downs on the value of its assets, flag-

ging a hit of up to \$1.1 billion as coronavirus drains demand for energy.

Following similar moves by global oil majors including BP and Australia's Woodside Petroleum and Origin Energy, Santos on Tuesday slashed the value of its assets and lowered the oil price assumptions that will underpin its future business models, as an expectation grows across the sector that the pain of the coronavirus-inflicted downturn will be felt for years to come.

The largest non-cash impairment in Santos' half-year results would be one of up to \$US700 million (\$997 million) before tax at its Gladstone LNG project. The ASX-listed company said a further \$US60-\$US100 million would be written off the value of its exploration projects mainly in central Australia.

The company, however, remains confident in the economics of Narrabri, arguing that even at low LNG prices, Narrabri would still be cheaper for NSW customers than LNG imports.

<https://www.boilingcold.com.au/cracks-at-chevrons-gorgon-threaten-lng-production/>

Cracks at Chevron's Gorgon threaten safety and LNG production

Peter Milne, Boiling Cold, 22/07/2020

Crucial pressure vessels that Chevron was to install on its \$US54 billion Gorgon LNG plant have thousands of dangerous cracks and a solution may cut production for months.

A lot is at stake for the finances of Gorgon's partners Chevron, Shell and ExxonMobil; and for the safety of the workers on Barrow Island.

Every day one of Gorgon's 5.2 million tonnes a year LNG trains is out of action about \$4.9 million of revenue is lost, assuming Gorgon's partners are achieving similar prices to Woodside.

If a crack caused one of the vessels to fail, it could be fatal for some of the about 213 workers that, according to the Gorgon Safety Report, operate the plant during the day shift.

Boiling Cold understands the vessels, called propane kettles, currently in use on LNG Trains 1 and 3 are of the same design and are built in the same factory as the cracked kettles.

Chevron was asked if it was safe to continue to operate these kettles. The US major did not answer.

The second of three LNG trains on Barrow Island is currently shut down for planned maintenance but was expected to resume production by July 11, according to a notification on the Chevron Australia website.

Part of the work was to replace eight propane kettles, also called shell and tube heat exchangers, that have vast quantities of flammable fluids flow through them.



Chevron's Gorgon plant in WA is riddled with cracks and workers fear an explosion.

Photo: supplied

When maintenance workers recently unpacked the replacement kettles and performed non-destructive testing, they found thousands of cracks in the steel shells, according to sources on the site.

The cracks are thought to have been caused by water getting through the thermal insulation around the vessels while they were stored for what Boiling Cold understands was some years.

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/workers-fear-for-their-safety-calls-for-gorgon-shutdown-after-cracks-found-in-critical-plant-components-20200722-p55eel.html>

'Workers fear for their safety': Calls for Gorgon shutdown after cracks found in critical plant components

Hamish Hastie, SMH, 22/07/2020

US energy giant Chevron's is battling to contain safety concerns at the \$US54 billion Gorgon plant after maintenance checks revealed thousands of cracks in essential equipment at Australia's second-largest gas export facility.

Cracks up to 1 metre long and 30 millimetres deep were found in between eight and 11 kettle heat exchangers on Train 2 of the plant. The kettles carry explosive pressurised propane and the discovery of the defects has prompted the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union to call for an immediate shutdown of the facility.

"The reports we're hearing of over eight kettles being damaged represents a serious failure in this critical piece of kit," AMWU WA secretary Steve McCartney said.

"If multiple kettles are showing cracks in testing on Train 2, there is a high risk there are cracks in the vessels on other trains. If these cracks are in the vessels, they cannot be fixed, and they need to be replaced immediately."

"We're hearing from workers that they're fearful for their safety and are reluctant to even go out to the blast-proof wall. We share their fears," McCartney added.

<https://inql.com.au/business/2020/07/22/bubble-bursts-why-queensland-lng-has-become-a-sad-and-expensive-tale-of-a-cursed-industry/>

Bubble bursts: Why LNG is now a sad, expensive tale of a cursed industry

John McCarthy, In Queensland, 22/07/2020

Building an LNG industry in Queensland seemed like a cracking idea around 2009-10 when the ideas were winding their way through the bureaucracy. It promised billions of dollars for a state which was then getting its first taste of crippling debt.

There were forecasts at the time that Treasury would be earning as much as \$900 million a year in coal seam gas royalties. It hasn't come close to that.

This week's US\$640-700 million write-down of Santos's GLNG \$18 billion project is just the latest in the billions of dollars wiped from the balance sheets of the companies involved. It's almost embarrassing now.

GLNG isn't even running anywhere near its nameplate capacity. Analysts think it is around 70 per cent and RBC Capital Markets now values GLNG at \$4.5 billion.

The others, APLNG and QGC, have also had massive write downs in value. Billions have been wiped off. What a bloodbath.

The environmental issues created by coal seam gas are still being debated and probably will for years to come as will the overall question of whether it was worthwhile.

SPECIAL: IPC SANTOS GASFIELD HEARINGS

<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/santos-meets-storm-of-opposition-on-narrabri-gas-20200720-p55dtkb>

Knitting nannas stick it to Santos on Narrabri gas

Angela Macdonald-Smith & Eloise Fowler, AFR, 20/07/2020

Santos, the Australian Workers' Union and the Narrabri local council have rejected a wall of environmental, farmer and activist opposition to a \$3.6 billion gas project that promises to meet up to half NSW's gas demand and help keep a lid on prices for manufacturers and households. Claims by the anti-coal-seam gas lobby that 98% of people opposed the project were "clearly fabricated", Narrabri and District

Chamber of Commerce's Russell Stewart told the first day of public hearings on the project, accusing activists of "relentless fearmongering" on the venture.

But opponents lined up to attack the project and the risk it poses to water and land resources, with some on Monday describing the venture as "dangerous", a "deseccration" of Aboriginal heritage and lacking social licence.

Mathematician Dr Bea Bleile, representing Knitting Nannas New England North West, said the NSW planning department's assessment failed to show that the gas project would not contribute to increased emissions and worsen global warming.

<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/santos-runs-the-gauntlet-as-opponents-rip-gas-plan-20200721-p55dz5>

Santos runs the gauntlet as opponents rip gas plan

Eloise Fowler & Angela Macdonald-Smith, 21/07/2020

Santos's proposed Narrabri gas project would turn the rich plains of the north-west NSW farming region into a "toxic dump", Warrumbungle Shire Councillor Kodi Brady told the state's Independent Planning Commission on Tuesday.

Brady was one of a motley crew of farmers, residents and environmental activists who told the IPC the project would poison the Great Artesian Basin, contaminate the land and make farms uninsurable.

The 59 speakers scoffed at Santos' claims that it can safely extract coal seam gas from the rich Liverpool Plains farmlands without damaging the environment, and create more regional jobs at the same time. They said Bunnings would hire more local people.

Fifth generation farmer Sarah Ciesolka from People for the Plains said the project could threaten the viability of her farm, which turns over \$50 million a year.

She said if the project contaminates groundwater, her farm may become uninsurable, citing major insurer IAG's decision not to offer policies to farmers with coal seam gas running through their property.

<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/lonely-voices-pipe-up-for-narrabri-gas-20200722-p55eag>

Lonely voices pipe up for Narrabri gas

Eloise Fowler & Angela Macdonald-Smith, AFR, 22/07/2020

A Santos employee, a former Liberal state politician, an Aboriginal-owned business owner and three local residents were lonely voices of support for the \$3.6 billion Narrabri gas project on the third day of hearings, again dominated by opposition from far and wide.

Supporters that vouched for Santos' safety and environmental record and pointed to the benefits the development would bring for local jobs and the economy were

dismissed as “bought and paid for testimonials” by one speaker.

Farmer and deputy rural fire service captain David Watt, whose property backs onto the Santos gas site, said it's impossible to vouch for the safety of the gas development, telling the IPC he wouldn't go into the forest to fight fires if the project goes ahead.

The wheat, barley and canola farmer said the gas flares from the project pose a risk to the “tinderbox” Pilliga State Forest near his farm, saying it's entirely possible for the wind to carry leaves and branches over the gas flares and sweep them beyond the non-vegetation zone, igniting the surrounding forest. He pointed to the risk gas pipes cause more danger as they may explode due to heat.

“I'm not going to be the guinea pig to test their infrastructure.”

<https://www.mvi.com.au/story/6842949/gas-scheme-makes-land-uninsurable-planning-commission-hears/>

Narrabri Gas Project would make land 'uninsurable' Planning Commission hears

Andrew Messenger, Namoi Valley Independent, 21/07/2020

Landholders' inability to get public liability insurance on land covered by gas projects is a “red flag” about the risks of the industry, the Independent Planning Commission has heard.

A farmer speaking at the hearings on Tuesday said it means the insurance industry considers the Narrabri Gas Project too risky.

A series of local farmers' groups opposing the 850-well project fronted the Commission to denounce the \$3.6 billion scheme during the second day of public hearings on Tuesday.

David Quince, who represents the Mullaley Gas and Pipeline Accord, repeated many of the criticisms aired on the first day of hearings.

Mr Quince, who says he represents 100 locals, said the project would exacerbate climate change, would risk water contamination and does not have social licence.

“Landholders with CSG infrastructure on their land cannot obtain public liability insurance suggesting that the risk has not been reduced to an acceptable level for insurers,” he said.

“Insurers are expert assessors of risk and likely damage.

“Their business success depends on the accuracy of their assessments.

“The fact that it is not possible for a landholder in this situation to obtain public liability insurance must be seen as a red flag.”

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/gas-protestors-accuse-santos-of-disregard-for-the-community/news-story/5a659e53f771335c7a2908e478c530bf>

Gas protestors accuse Santos of 'disregard' for the community

Perry Williams, Aus, 22/07/2020

A ‘political plot’ between Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and former NSW Resources Minister Anthony Roberts was evidence the outcome of Santos's \$3.5bn Narrabri project has been pre-determined, a gas protester has claimed.

At a Council of Australian Governments meeting in 2016, Mr Roberts was overheard on camera saying to the then Federal Energy Minister Mr Frydenberg: “We'll just back you, mate. People aren't going to love us, they're going to hate us.”

Mr Roberts later clarified his comments were a reference to “reform of the national energy marketplace” and that he was concerned the comments had been seized upon by opponents of the coal seam gas development.

Screenshots of the two politicians talking were shown to the Independent Planning Commission on Wednesday by an opponent of the mooted gas project, who said the conversation showed that politicians had plotted a pre-determined outcome for Santos.

“I can imagine there is probably enormous pressure on the three of you from both a federal and a state level to make a decision in favour of this gas mine,” protester Julia Walsh told IPC commissioners Steve O'Connor, John Hann and Professor Snow Barlow on the third day of public hearings on the project.

“What disturbed me quite a bit about this exchange is they think it's funny. They think that the impact they're going to impose on the people of NSW — particularly the communities in the area and the generations to come, who will be faced with the toxic legacy of the project — they think it's funny. They laughed about the fact that ‘they are going to hate us’. Then they acknowledged their duplicitous nature with ‘we won't say that in front of the TV’ but they didn't know the cameras and microphone were on.”

<https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/6847008/narrabri-gas-project-far-too-risky-says-former-fire-chief-chief-scientist-in-fourth-day-of-hearings/>

Narrabri Gas Project 'far too risky' says former fire chief, chief scientist in fourth day of hearings

Andrew Messenger, Northern Daily Leader, 23/07/2020

The former Commonwealth Chief Scientist and the former NSW Fire and Rescue Commissioner have asked the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) not to approve the Narrabri Gas Project.

In the project's fourth day of public hearings a series of experts condemned the pro-

posed \$3.6 billion mining project as a threat to the planet's climate and a bushfire risk.

Former Commissioner Greg Mullins, representing Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, said the proposed mine is “far too risky to proceed”, describing the region as fire-prone.

Among other bushfire risks of mining in the area, Mr Mullins said gas flaring could even ignite a new bushfire, and said the project would be upwind of the highway, cutting off the only escape.

Former Australian Chief Scientist Penny Sackett completely rejected [arguments for social and economic benefits] in her testimony to the commissioners, saying the project would create an unsustainable amount of methane, which is a far more intense greenhouse gas than carbon.

“All new fossil fuel production basically has to stop in order to meet the two-degree target,” she said

She said Australia could not meet its “climate budget” without beginning the transition to renewable energy immediately, without any transitional shock-absorber. The country has run out of time, she said.

“The time for gas to be a transition fuel was probably 20 or 30 years ago.”

<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/ipc-warned-of-serious-water-risk-from-narrabri-gas-20200723-p55eqd>

IPC warned of serious water risk from Narrabri gas

Elouise Fowler & Angela Macdonald-Smith, AFR, 23/07/2020

Serious and irreversible damage to aquifers and groundwater can't be ruled out if Santos' \$3.6 billion Narrabri gas project goes ahead, scientists and engineers have told the Independent Planning Commission, casting doubt on critical assertions by the oil and gas company on the risks to water.

In a morning session that saw a stark change in tone from the motley crew of farmers, local residents and environmental activists who vocally opposed the project earlier this week, several scientists disputed Santos' assertions that there is little or no connectivity between coal seams and important shallow aquifers.

Two engineers picked holes in Santos and the NSW Department's modelling, telling the commissioners on the fourth day of hearings that key data was missing that showed coal seam gas drilling in Narrabri had the potential to seriously damage underground water systems. Both were closely questioned by the commissioners.

Official modelling failed to assess data on the risk of water contamination from deep drilling, making it impossible to rule out with certainty, said Dr Kevin Hayley, an engineer from consultancy Groundwater Solutions who has been retained by the NSW Environmental Defender's Office.

Associate Professor Matthew Currell from the RMIT University engineering department backed Dr Hayley, telling the commissioners that the risks to both groundwater quality and quantity were considerable.

“The area provides recharge for Australia’s most important aquifer system – the Great Artesian Basin and is close to the vitally important Namoi Alluvium,” he said.

“The risks of groundwater and surface contamination and drawdown are real.”

Dr Currell said that operating a large-scale project such as Narrabri, involving 850 wells, meant “failures are really really difficult to eliminate”.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/santos-calculations-do-not-stack-up/news-story/8ee92decae7c3929afe99229c44770a>

Santos calculations ‘do not stack up’

Perry Williams, Aus, 23/07/2020

An economic consultancy has rejected claims made by Santos that its \$3.6bn Narrabri project will provide cheaper gas than LNG imports as the Independent Planning Commission weighs whether to recommend the controversial development.

Santos has said its Narrabri coal seam gas development can “compete effectively” in the NSW market even if two rival LNG terminals proceed with gas prices in Sydney up to 12 per cent lower should the development receive the go ahead.

Canberra consultancy Pegasus Economics told the IPC’s public hearing into Narrabri the calculations do not stack up with LNG imports into NSW costing \$US4.20 (\$5.88) a gigajoule according to Platts figures. That compares with a constant gas price of \$8.70GJ including transport costs to Sydney in Santos’ 2016 economic analysis of the gas field.

“It is not true in my opinion to say the Narrabri gas project will always be in a position to deliver cheaper gas prices to NSW than LNG import terminals possibly could,” Pegasus Economics director Alistair Davey told the IPC after conducting Narrabri analysis on behalf of lobby group North West Alliance.

Former BHP and ExxonMobil executive, Tim Forcey, also rejected Santos’ claims.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/rejected-critics-unload-on-proposed-santos-gas-project-20200723-p55ewh.html>

‘Rejected’: Critics unload on proposed Santos gas project

Nick O’Malley, SMH, 23/07/2020

The \$3.6 billion coal seam gas project proposed for north-western NSW has been described as destructive to water tables and the climate, economically unviable, unnecessary to Australia’s energy needs and as a dangerous fire hazard during Independent Planning Commission hearings.

The plan, under which energy company Santos would drill 850 wellheads in the Pilliga region near Narrabri, is among the most contentious proposals in NSW history, with the commission receiving around 23,700 submissions from people and bodies opposing it and 300 in support.

“If any of the economics or any singular one of the environment, social or governance factors in this decision were contemplated, the project would be rejected,” Bruce Robertson, an energy analyst with the pro-renewables Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, told the hearing on Thursday.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/australia-is-sponsoring-a-failing-gas-industry-20200723-p55ew6.html>

Australia is sponsoring a failing gas industry

Bruce Robertson, SMH, 23/07/2020

The controversial Narrabri gas project enters the final stages of approval with more than 400 people presenting to the Independent Planning Commission, which will determine its fate. It is the most hotly contested resource project in NSW’s history. Of more than 23,000 submissions, 98 per cent object.

While I was queueing up to be heard on Thursday afternoon, there was another queue forming. Liquefied Natural Gas tankers in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans are motoring in circles while they wait to find a market for their unwanted product. Gas is currently being almost given away on international markets.

The very last thing the world needs is more gas. Far from seeing the “gas-powered recovery” our politicians desire, we are seeing a gas-fired depression around the globe.

• *Bruce Robertson is a gas/LNG financial analyst with the Institute of Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, a public think tank.*

<https://www.theland.com.au/story/6843712/at-least-talk-is-cheap-because-gas-sure-aint/>

Landholders remain unconvinced on gas price, salt waste plan

Andrew Norris, The Land, 24/07/2020

Many concerns have been raised in the first few days of the public hearing for the Narrabri Gas Project, currently before the Independent Planning Commission.

Among the top criticisms so far have been a lack of answers on salt waste treatment and an admission by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment executive director David Kitto that the project was unlikely to force “downward pressure” on Australian gas prices because it wasn’t big enough to do so (see p9).

The projected gas volumes for the project also work out at less than half a per cent of the volume of liquid natural gas exported

through the Gladstone Port from June 2019 to June 2020.

There is also no clarity around the disposal of the salt waste. In its EIS, Santos said there would be, on average, 47t of salt produced per day as waste and this volume could peak as high as 115t/day (in years two and four).

The government seems hellbent on getting this project through, which was evident when it shut down the CSG moratorium that was designed to allow the 2014 NSW Chief Scientist’s recommendations to safeguard the industry to be implemented.

Even Santos said in its own EIS fact sheet: “In 2014 the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer concluded that, with appropriate safeguards and controls, natural gas from coal seams can be safely extracted”.

But those safeguards have been ditched by the government.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/narrabri-gas-project-to-be-one-of-australia-s-top-greenhouse-emitters-20200725-p55fje.html>

Narrabri gas project to be one of Australia’s top greenhouse emitters

Nick O’Malley, SMH, 25/07/2020

The proposed Narrabri Gas Project – which would see 850 coal seam gas wells sunk in the Pilliga region of north-west NSW – would become one of the top 100 greenhouse gas emitters in Australia if approved, an Independent Planning Commission hearing has been told.

Associate Professor Bryce Kelly, an environmental scientist from the University of New South Wales who is part of an international team currently conducting the world’s largest study on methane emissions from coal seam gas, said that the documents supporting the project “work really hard” to make the greenhouse gas footprint look small.

The Narrabri project alone would release around 1 million tonnes of greenhouse gases each year, making it the 54th largest emitter in the country.

A second option for which Santos is also seeking approval would see the project ranked as the 64th greatest single greenhouse-gas emitter in the nation.

Professor Kelly said that in its Environmental Impact Statements, Santos used outdated modelling to underestimate its predicted impact on global warming.

<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/narrabri-gas-opponents-heartened-by-dig-into-water-risks-20200727-p55fqt>

Narrabri gas opponents heartened by dig into water risks

Angela Macdonald-Smith, AFR, 28/07/2020

Lawyers and scientists who warned NSW’s Independent Planning Commission that Santos’ \$3.6 billion Narrabri gas project

could irreversibly harm water resources are taking encouragement from the IPC's move to test those claims with experts at the NSW planning department.

Counsel Robert White at the Environmental Defenders Office said the unusual move by the IPC to call extra meetings with experts to explore evidence presented in the public hearings was heartening.

"We are very pleased that the issues raised by the experts who gave evidence last Thursday and Friday – but particularly last Thursday – that they are going to be further explored by the IPC," White said.

"I think it's fair to say that those experts have given the IPC matters to think about."

The agenda for the meeting with the Water Expert Panel, headed by Professor Peter Cook from the University of Melbourne, refers to the concerns raised that "knowledge gaps in relation to the groundwater model, geology, hydrogeology and seismic activity create uncertainty about the risks posed" by the project.

Also on the agenda is the potential for the contamination of groundwater through the failure of containment of coal seam gas wells, and the management of salt waste from the project.

NUKE MADNESS

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/07/trumps-new-foreign-investment-agency-itching-to-build-on-nuclear-quicksand/>

Trump's new foreign investment agency: Itching to build on nuclear quicksand

Victor Gilinsky & Henry Sokolski, 17/07/2020

In 2018 a Republican Congress, with strong Democratic support, created the US International Development Finance Corporation to "provide the developing world with financially sound alternatives to unsustainable and irresponsible state-directed initiatives." That's government-speak for competing with China's Belt and Road initiative. It didn't take very long, however, for the new agency to fall in line with an irresponsible state-directed initiative of its own—the Trump administration's all-out effort to encourage nuclear exports.

Would the country have to have a system of safety regulation? Would it have to meet security requirements? Would it have to allow international inspections? It isn't even clear whether the agency's support would be limited to US reactor exports, and therefore subject to the requirements of the Atomic Energy Act's Section 123 or whether they could also cover equipment purchases from other suppliers. Such details determine whether a federal bureaucracy is constrained to act responsibly, or whether it is free to cater to the latest whims of the White House.

The agency has made assurances that advanced "small modular reactors" and "microreactors" will have significantly lower costs than existing nuclear power

plants and "could help deliver a zero-emission, reliable, and secure power source to developing countries, promoting economic growth and affordable energy access in underserved communities." This is all pie in the sky: None of these plants have been built, and their characteristics and economics are speculative.

The agency announced the change with unusual haste. July 10th marked the end of a 30-day public comment period. The agency's own rules that risky projects, say, a large industrial plant, "are disclosed to the public for a comment period of 60 days." Under its current rules, nuclear reactors and parts fall in the riskiest category, under "Categorical Prohibitions." The proposed change involves not one risky project but an entire class of such projects, which would bounce from the forbidden category into the fully acceptable category. But for some reason the agency only saw fit to give half the normal time for public comment.

CLIMATE CRISIS

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/review-of-australia-hopeless-environmental-laws-completely-ignores-climate-change-76824/>

Review of Australia's hopeless environmental laws completely ignores climate change

Michael Mazengarb, *Renew Economy*, 21/07/2020

A review of Australia's primary environmental law has delivered a well reported and damning assessment of its effectiveness, or lack of it. But perhaps its greatest failure is that it completely ignores the impacts of climate change on the Australian environment.

The review found Australia's environmental laws are ineffective, and "do not enable the Commonwealth to play its role in protecting and conserving environmental matters that are important for the nation."

"It is not fit to address current or future environmental challenges," the report says.

However, while the report has flagged a range of possible reforms to Australia's environmental laws, it has stopped short of recommending that climate change considerations are incorporated as part of Australia's environmental laws.

Greenpeace Australia campaigner Jonathan Moylan told RenewEconomy that climate change was already causing damage vulnerable parts of Australia's ecosystems and that it was imperative that Australia's core environmental law was responsive to the impacts of global warming.

The review of the EPBC Act was commissioned by federal environment minister Sussan Ley, who expressed a desire to see the obligations imposed by the EPBC Act wound back in an effort to reduce "green tape".

In launching the review, Ley indicated the

Morrison government wants to see the EPBC Act amended to reduce the opportunity for environmental groups to use the Act as the basis for legal challenges, with a range of project developers, particularly those in the fossil fuel industries, complaining of "environmental lawfare".

There had been calls to loosen the environmental laws for coal and gas projects, particularly concerning the "water trigger" which requires the federal government to consider the impacts of coal and gas projects on water resources before awarding approval for a project.

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/jul/22/world-first-legal-case-student-accuses-australia-of-misleading-investors-on-climate-risk>

'World-first' legal case: student accuses Australia of misleading investors on climate risk

Adam Morton, *Guardian*, 22/07/2020

A Melbourne university student has launched what has been described as a world-first legal case against the Australian government, accusing it of misleading investors in sovereign bonds by failing to disclose the financial risk caused by the climate crisis.

In a claim filed in the federal court on Tuesday, Katta O'Donnell, a fifth-year law student at La Trobe University, said the government was breaching a legal duty and deceiving investors by not informing them upfront of the climate risk they face.

Climate risk refers to assessments of the expected impact of the climate crisis on investments, including the likelihood that fossil fuel investments will lose value and potentially become stranded as the world reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Rob Henderson, a former National Australia Bank markets chief economist, now an economics and financial consultant, said it was a "really interesting claim".

He said there had been a significant shift in thinking over the past decade that had accelerated after the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority warned in 2017 that it was not safe for companies to ignore climate risks. He said Australia's major banks now all published annual climate reports and issued green bonds.

"In some ways I'm surprised this claim hasn't been brought earlier, and the commonwealth hasn't taken the initiative in laying out how it would do this properly," Henderson said. "It's an anomaly in our current financial system."

STOP WATER MINING
THE NEXT RESOURCES BATTLE



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-27/big-australian-polluters-plan-to-achieve-net-zero-emissions/12493424>

Big Australian polluters band together to plan how to achieve net zero emissions by 2050

Daniel Mercer, ABC, 27/07/2020

A group of Australia's biggest companies – including some of the country's largest polluters – has banded together as part of efforts to make their operations carbon neutral by 2050.

Industrial giants Woodside, BHP and BlueScope Steel are among a coalition of businesses including financial heavyweights National Australia Bank and AustralianSuper that have signed on to an initiative aimed at stripping emissions from Australia's supply chains.

The group, known as the Australian Industry Energy Transitions Initiative, has the backing of the Federal Government through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the CSIRO.

Key to the initiative will be finding ways to reduce pollution from emissions-intensive industries such as LNG, steelmaking, aluminium processing and chemical refining, which collectively generate exports worth \$160 billion a year.

Simon McKeon, a former CSIRO chairman who will head the initiative, said such industries typically faced structural challenges in cutting emissions.

However, the former Australian of the Year said there were growing opportunities as technologies developed and costs reduced.

FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/07/trump-pushes-to-deliver-on-2016-campaign-pledge-to-essentially-get-rid-of-epa/>

Trump pushes to deliver on 2016 campaign pledge to essentially “get rid of” EPA

Rebecca Leber, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 23/07/2020

On Wednesday July 15, President Trump achieved a longstanding goal in weakening environmental protection: The administration significantly narrowed the 50-year-old National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a law that requires the government to study the impact of federal projects on the communities and wild areas around them. By skipping steps and shortening deadlines, these changes help to fast-track fossil fuel infrastructure like pipelines and highways, a move that leaves out the voices of poor neighborhoods and people of color on the pollution in their communities.

This move is the latest in a litany of rollbacks: The president's agencies have already weakened more than 100 regulations for power plants, cars, and oil and gas operations.

But the rest of this year will be unlike anything we've seen yet as the president

pushes to deliver on his 2016 campaign pledge to essentially “get rid of” the Environmental Protection Agency.

Here are some of the big-ticket items that are left:

- Allowing unrestricted climate emissions from oil and gas;
- Weakening oversight of how facilities dispose of toxic coal residue from coal-fired power plants;
- Letting newly built paper mills, auto factories, plastics production, and power plants get away with more pollution;
- Opening public lands and oceans to drilling – without paying back the taxpayer;
- Limiting science in the EPA and Interior.

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/covid-rescue-nsw-government-sitting-on-billions-in-mining-approvals-which-could-kickstart-economy/news-story/9bf2711b4e4b08e0d574f1c0324f2>

COVID rescue: NSW Government sitting on “billions” in mining approvals which could kickstart economy

Clarrissa Bye, Daily Telegraph, 22/07/2020

The NSW Minerals Council says massive \$13 billion pipeline of mining projects should be given the green light by the state government to pump up NSW's shell-shocked economy.

At least 32 projects – including 11 metal projects – are sitting in various stages of planning and approvals.

Mining is already the state's largest export industry by dollars, and employs 40,000 people.

Planning Minister Rob Stokes said the government had already determined 67 projects in the past 12 weeks.

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/angus-taylor-works-to-undo-finkel-as-key-institutions-struggle-with-change-46985/>

Angus Taylor works to undo Finkel, as key institutions struggle with change

David Leitch, Renew Economy, 23/07/2020

Folks calling for a “green stimulus” – or whatever the phrase is – are well meaning but naïve beyond what is reasonable. A Government that appoints Keith Pitt as resources minister, Angus Taylor as minister determining the fate of the energy system, and a governing Coalition that has hard line Queenslanders as its biggest voting bloc of parliamentary members is not going to take any notice of well meaning scientists who have the interest of all Australians at heart. More cunning is required, particularly with the demands of the CFMEU also needing to be negotiated.

There are ex politicians, such as John Hewson and Bob Carr who are on the side of the angels. So, too, are virtually all state governments. But they aren't organized and the antipathy between Queensland premier Palaszczuk and her NSW counter-

part Berijiklian doesn't help. But the long term prize is the future for Australia, and the short term prize is political greatness.

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/taylor-appoints-his-former-advisor-and-a-prominent-ret-critic-to-arena-board-51157/>

Taylor appoints his former advisor and a prominent RET critic to ARENA board

Michel Mazengarb, Renew Economy, 23/07/2020

A long-flagged shake-up of the board of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) was announced on Thursday, with a former key advisor to Angus Taylor and an economist who co-founded one of the country's most virulent critics of renewable energy targets gaining appointments.

Taylor's appointments include his former energy advisor, and former Deutsche Bank analyst, John Hirjee, who received a two year appointment to the ARENA board, less than a year after leaving Taylor's office to take up a position at ANZ Bank. Hirjee served as a senior energy adviser to Angus Taylor between September 2018 and August 2019.

Joining Hirjee on the ARENA board is managing director of Northbridge Consulting Services, Anna Matysek.

Matysek was a co-founder and director of consultancy BAEconomics, alongside current BAEconomics head Brian Fisher.

BAEconomics has long been the preferred source of climate change modelling for the Liberal Party, and Fisher produced widely planned modelling of the Australian Labor Party's energy and climate policies taken to the 2019 federal election.

This modelling produced greatly inflated costs that the Morrison government in general, and Taylor in particular, used to feed attacks on Labor's more ambitious climate platform.

Angus Taylor already had a strong personal relationship with incoming ARENA chair Justin Punch, including as a skiing buddy, before his appointment was made.

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2020/07/25/mysterious-mr-power-architect-our-recovery/159559920010148>

Mysterious Mr Power, architect of our recovery

Margaret Simons, Saturday Paper, 25/07/2020

Neville Power, the man picked to head the National Covid-19 Coordination Commission (NCCC), made his name presiding over iron ore mining in the Pilbara.

Power is a big man. At nearly 62, it is still one of the first things people mention about him – how tall, solid and fit he is. And he is remembered at Fortescue as having been tough but likeable, “highly competent”, credited with rescuing the company during a “near death” experience in 2012



Covid Commission boss Neville Power. Photo: Lukas Coch/AAP Image

when plunging iron ore prices together with high debt threatened to sink it.

But for a figure of such prominence and influence, tasked to “anticipate and mitigate the economic and social impacts of the global Covid-19 pandemic”, the public knows precious little about him.

Power, and most of his fellow commissioners, have extensive business interests, which has created concern about potential conflicts of interest. More fundamentally though, there are questions about the purpose and value of the commission itself.

During a recent appearance before the senate select committee on Covid-19, Power distanced the NCCC from an interim report of its own manufacturing taskforce, which was leaked to the media in May and included suggestions that Australian taxpayers should underwrite a massive expansion of the domestic gas industry – including helping to open new fields and building hundreds of kilometres of pipelines. It was only a draft, he said, and “should not be taken as a view from the commission”.

He was on the record, from his time at Fortescue, as supporting the building of such a pipeline to connect the gas fields of the west to the east, and as being in favour of gas as a transition fuel. He is now on the board of gas company Strike Energy, although he says he has stopped attending board meetings to avoid conflicts.

In June, Power told the senate select committee on Covid-19 that in the first days the commission had “used our networks and experience” to address personal protective equipment shortages, unblock supply chains and connect laid-off staff with jobs.

Since then, the only visible outputs have been a series of information sheets, directed at business, on how to be “Covid-safe”.

They are useful, but generic, and nothing about the documents makes it clear why a special commission was needed to compose them.

As NCCC chair, perhaps Power’s most pragmatic insight has been to describe fertiliser manufacturing as one of the “biggest opportunities” for Australia.

Meanwhile, Power told the senators, the commission has talked to more than 1000 individuals and organisations, which are listed on the NCCC’s website.

A sample check of this list by The Saturday Paper revealed many were only included because they attended webinars addressed by Power or his fellow commissioners.

There are curious omissions, too. SBS is listed, for example, but the ABC is not, despite its recognised role as an emergency broadcaster. A spokesperson for the ABC confirmed it has no record of being consulted by the NCCC.

For most of his time at Fortescue, Power lived in the shadow of his flamboyant chair, Andrew Forrest, who founded and built the company from nothing. Power’s own backstory has been trotted out in just a few personal interviews he has given in his corporate career.

Born in 1958, he was raised on his family’s cattle property, Bushy Park, about 70 kilometres from Mount Isa, and was home-schooled until he was 12. His nanny was Betty Brown, who remembers Power as “a serious little fellow ... subdued and very calm and good at his schoolwork. He was very keen to learn and better himself.”

Power left school at 15 and started as an apprentice fitter and turner at Mount Isa Mines, working his way up over 20 years to run the company’s gold division. He graduated with a bachelor of engineering from what is now the University of Southern Queensland in 1985 and in 1995 completed an MBA from the University of Queensland.

The personal stories about him in the financial press are studded with action-man anecdotes. He rides horses and makes his own corned beef from cattle he has killed himself. He still owns Bushy Park and musters the cattle there. He pilots helicopters and planes.

Past employers include Smorgon Steel, Thiess and Fortescue.

He was, insiders say, calm and reliable – the bedrock under Forrest’s ambitious dreams, able to successfully ride the roller-coaster of iron ore prices while growing the company.

But the man who ran Thiess is remembered so differently it is hard to believe they are the same person.

Three people who worked with Power at Thiess blamed him for what they described as bad management of important projects. Contacted for comment, Power did not respond.

A former Fortescue employee who left the company over the way it dealt with Indigenous owners describes the company culture – which Power and Forrest liked to characterise as a tough but caring corporate family – as a “FIFO culture: standing not for fly-in fly-out but fit in or fuck off”.

The head of the Yinjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation, Michael Woodley, told The Saturday Paper that Power should be judged by his actions and his legacy – a community still divided and a company weighed down by reputational damage and yet-to-be-determined compensation.

“He was following an already established agenda in how to deal with First Nations people.

“He wasn’t disrespectful in his conversation,” says Woodley. “Where I found him being disrespectful was his actions. And those actions say that he was weak and inefficient.”

Power remains something of a blank vessel: the humble man who grew up and worked his way to the top of corporate Australia while eschewing the flamboyance of our best-known business figures. His position means he appears uniquely positioned to influence how the country will attempt to recover from the economic devastation of Covid-19. The reality behind the appearance is yet to become clear.

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2020/07/28/covid-commission-secret/>

'Dark room' dealings: Secretive COVID council deciding Australia's future

Josh Butler, *New Daily*, 28/07/2020

The government's secretive COVID business taskforce has been described as something suiting "someone who's a dictator", with concerns over an "opaque" policy-making process for jobs and industry.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced on Monday that the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission, a hand-picked organisation of business leaders, would be renamed to the National COVID-19 Commission (NCC) Advisory Board.

In addition, it has undergone a "reformation as a Prime Minister's advisory body".

The technical change means that the commission will now "work within government" and give it a "new gear" as it works across the JobMaker scheme with the goal of boosting business growth.

"It won't be an external agency. It will work within government and can form part of the cabinet deliberative processes," Morrison said.

Morrison's decision to rebadge the COVID commission has only deepened the concerns of independent MP Zali Steggall.

"It is concerning that the government has decided to move to an advisory body structure within the department rather than an independent commission. This further entrenches the lack of accountability and transparency around the work and advice of the NCCC," she said.

She said she was pleased to see new commission members – such as former Bendigo Bank director Mike Hirst and former CEO of the Regional Australia Institute Su McCluskey – would bring experience

in regional affairs, but was disappointed there were not more members with a clean energy background.

"Unfortunately, there still does not appear to be any gender equity or transparency in the appointment process," Steggall said.

Labor senator Katy Gallagher said the change would further shield the commission's work from scrutiny.

South Australian Senator Rex Patrick said he supported the commission's work, but slammed the secrecy surrounding its operations.

"If the government is to recognise this as important, they have to appreciate that the Australian public needs visibility on what they're doing and a mechanism to contribute."

Greens leader Adam Bandt was another who took aim at what he claimed was a "secret" commission.

"The government's new coronavirus commission is just a regular packaging of its old plans, based on trickle-down economics," Bandt said.

"It will operate secretly. There will not be the transparency that we need.

"But worst of all, it seems to be intent on propping up a dying fossil-fuel industry and giving support to big business at the expense of the public good."

<https://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/news/queensland/queensland-resources-council-wants-freeze-on-coal-gas-royalties/news-story/494cf5582954d-99f795603a3f3318fe3>

Queensland Resources council wants freeze on coal, gas royalties

Jack McKay, *Courier-Mail*, 28/07/2020

The rates of royalties for the state's coal, metal and gas reserves would be frozen for a decade under a push from the Queensland Resources Council to unlock investment and create jobs.

The QRC will today urge a Queensland parliamentary committee to recommend changes to royalty laws so that a 10-year freeze would be enshrined in legislation.

QRC chief executive Ian Macfarlane said the freeze on royalties would best ensure Queensland gets "as much of the investment and jobs as possible".

The LNP has already promised to deliver a 10-year freeze if it wins the upcoming October election – a commitment Macfarlane said the government should also make.




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