



Fossil Fool Bulletin

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

Fossilfool.com.au

FFB 3:31 • 11 AUGUST 2020

Whitehaven's Vickery mine approved, a day after company charged with 16 new offences



Photo: Whitehaven Coal

The NSW Independent Planning Commission has approved Whitehaven Coal's Vickery mine near Boggabri.

The news left the local community and environmental groups gob-smacked, as it emerged just one day after the NSW Resources Regulator commenced prosecution proceedings against Whitehaven's Narrabri Coal Pty Ltd and Narrabri Coal Operations Pty Ltd in the NSW Land and Environment Court for alleged breaches of the state's mining laws.

The matters relate to Exploration Licence EL6243, which forms part of Whitehaven Coal's Narrabri operations located 24 km northwest of Boggabri.

The Regulator alleges in eight separate charges that Narrabri Coal Pty Ltd breached section 378D of the Mining Act 1992 by failing to comply with conditions of an activity approval for Exploration Licence 6243. The Regulator also alleges in eight other charges that Narrabri Coal Operations Pty Ltd

caused or permitted the commission of the offences in breach of section 378D of the Mining Act 1992. The charges relate to the alleged construction of unauthorised tracks, failing to rehabilitate drill sites and drilling of bore holes contrary to exploration activity approval conditions.

The matters are set down for mention in the Land and Environment Court on September 18. Each offence carries a maximum penalty of \$1.1 million.

Described by Lock the Gate as "bitterly disappointing" the Vickery approval is an indictment of the Berejiklian Government's failure to protect farmland, communities, and water resources.

Whitehaven has previously indicated that due to plummeting global coal prices, it will not make an investment decision on the project this year, leaving a pall of uncertainty hanging over the heads of locals.

The Vickery plan was publicly opposed by the Narrabri Shire Council, with the

council listing concerns around the social and economic impacts of the project.

Social, agricultural impacts

Lock the Gate said that if the company decides to proceed with the new 10 million tonnes per annum coal mine, it will irreparably alter the social fabric of the Boggabri farming community and hurt agriculture in the district.

Whitehaven would dig up 1,284 hectares of land – much of it either fertile farmland or remnant woodland – for the project.

Whitehaven MD and CEO Paul Flynn welcomed the news. He said Whitehaven's focus will now shift to obtaining the necessary secondary approvals and any further project optimisation as a precursor to works commencing under the new approval.

"Whitehaven continues to be cautious in allocating capital to expansion not-

• Continued p2

• **P2: Errors found in Narrabri CSG assessment**

• **P3: Campaign launched to save Ningaloo**

• **P4: Doctors urge climate action**

Whitehaven charged

• Continued from p1

ing the evolving impacts of COVID-19 on coal markets and pricing. While there are still considerable risks and uncertainties for the global the economic outlook given the continued spread of the virus, the fundamentals of our business model continue to remain robust," he said.

Social licence gone

Boggabri farmer Sally Hunter said, "Whitehaven is a terrible corporate citizen and has no social licence left in the north west. It has been fined for allowing toxic blast fumes to drift over neighbouring properties, polluting air and water, illegal dumping of waste, stealing surface water, illegal clearing of bushland, and worker safety breaches.

"Whitehaven has already been taken to court five times, once by the EPA, once by Maules Creek Community Council, and currently by the Resources Access Regulator over alleged water theft, the Resources Regulator for workplace safety breaches, and South East Forest Rescue over its unfulfilled biodiversity offset obligations.

"This latest announcement makes it the sixth time Whitehaven has been taken to court for bad behaviour at its north west coal mines."

Recently, mapping was released showing Whitehaven owns 61,050 ha of land in the north west - equivalent to nearly double the size of Malta (31,600 ha).

Questions remain about how the mine will supply the up to 1,750 megalitres of water it will consume annually. Landholders are seriously concerned that in times of prolonged drought, the company will again buy up agricultural water licences or breach environmental laws to take water unlawfully, as Whitehaven is alleged to have done at the nearby Maules Creek mine.

The Vickery mine would be located close to the property and homestead "Kurrumbede" which was the inspiration for several Dorothea Mackellar poems including the famous 'My Country'. There are fears blast activity at the mine will harm the historic homestead and outbuildings.

F

Narrabri CSG assessment riddled with errors, says TAI

New analysis by the Australia Institute shows that the NSW Department of Planning, Industry, and Environment's (DPIE) assessment of the Narrabri Gas Project, downplays environmental impacts and overstates economic benefits of gas development to the region, relying on modelling commissioned by the proponent of the project while ignoring research and experience from previously failed coal seam gas (CSG) experiments in Queensland.

Contrary to the Department's assessment, which naively accepts many of Santos' inaccurate claims about the project, the Australia Institute shows that the Narrabri Gas Project will do nothing to improve energy security and reliability, increase global emissions, and provide few benefits to the local community.

Key findings:

- Despite lifecycle emissions from the Narrabri Gas Project being equivalent to almost a full year of NSW's emissions—equivalent to building four new Tomago aluminium smelters—the Department characterises the project's emissions as "small" and incorrectly claims it is consistent Australia's Paris commitments.
- Additional gas supply will not increase energy security or reliability, or bring down gas prices. The Department's assessment ignores the obvious fact that Narrabri will simply displace lower-cost gas from the Cooper Basin, allowing that gas to be exported, and maintains the project will lower gas prices despite Santos and the Department's own Director saying it wouldn't.
- The Department claims the Narrabri Gas Project will support new gas power stations despite AEMO projections that gas capacity in the NEM will fall by 40%. Australia is headed toward a future with less gas not more, with gas already being replaced by cleaner, more cost-efficient electrical systems for most uses.
- The Department accepts Santos' questionable modelling of economic benefits, and ignores the actual experience of communities in Queensland with coal seam gas (CSG), including:

• Detailed research from Queensland's CSG regions showing local businesses



reported a decline in all measures of local assets as a result of CSG development including financial capital, human capital, infrastructure, social cohesion and the environment.

- CSIRO research showing there was virtually no flow on jobs created in the retail, services or manufacturing sectors and 1.8 agriculture jobs lost for every new CSG job.
- CSIRO research showing only around 6 per cent of people in gas field areas in Queensland thought gas development had changed their region for the better.
- Santos' own modelling shows the project would lead to a reduction in employment in farming, mining and manufacturing

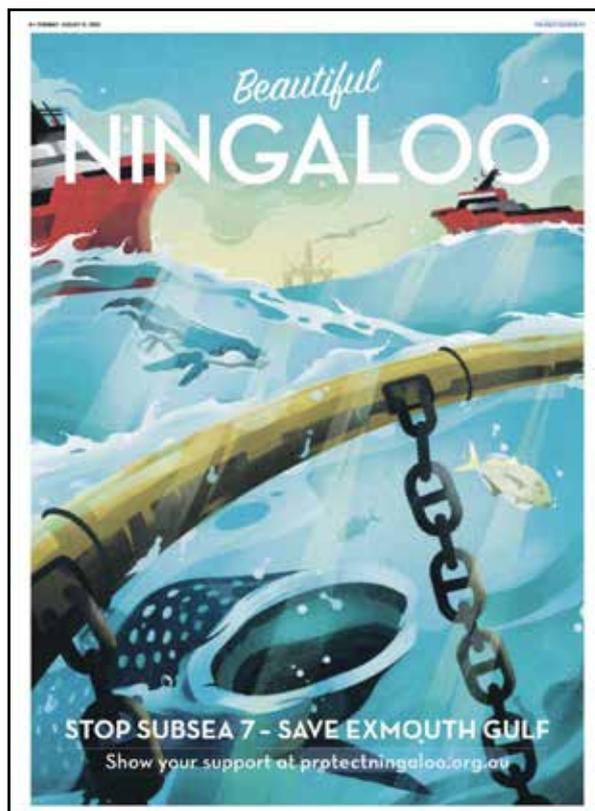
"The Narrabri Gas Project will do nothing to improve energy security and reliability, will push up gas prices and provide few benefits to the local community," said Mark Ogge, Principal Advisor at The Australia Institute.

"For the Department of Planning, Industry, and Environment to present emissions equivalent to almost an entire year of NSW emissions as "small" demonstrates a lack of understanding of the seriousness of global warming. This is extraordinary in the wake of the Black Summer bushfires.

"The Department has seemingly drunk the Santos Kool-Aid and their assessment is full of obvious mistakes. Rather than applying serious scrutiny to Santos' submissions, they have simply accepted the company's highly questionable claims."

F

Ningaloo campaign launched



Beautiful Ningaloo – one of WA’s biggest ever conservation communications campaigns – has kicked off with a series of major print, radio and online advertisements, and the mass distribution of postcards across Perth.

The campaign is designed to alert the broad community to the risks posed by a massive oil and gas pipeline fabrication facility and towing operation earmarked for an undeveloped, highly biodiverse part of Exmouth Gulf, Ningaloo, prized by tourism businesses, locals and scientists, alike.

Paul Gamblin, Director, Protect Ningaloo, said, “Today marks the beginning of a major new phase of the campaign to protect Exmouth Gulf, Ningaloo. We’re up against Subsea 7, a multi-billion-dollar global corporation, so it’ll be a David and Goliath struggle but we’re determined to protect our beautiful Ningaloo.”

“For two years, we’ve implored Subsea 7 to do the right thing by withdrawing their controversial proposal and avoiding harming Exmouth Gulf, Ningaloo. But it’s been to no avail. So now we need to ramp it up.”

In addition to full-page newspaper advertisements, and on AM and FM radio, online promotion and a giant ‘postcard’ mobile billboard, the Protect

Ningaloo campaign is distributing postcards initially to around a quarter of the households in the wider Perth metropolitan area, and posters to venues across the State.

“Tens of thousands of people have already joined our campaign and this enormous support means we can now take up the cause in a much bigger way than ever before. Ningaloo-Exmouth Gulf is a special place to so many people – it’s a beloved part of our shared heritage - which explains the torrent of letters that people have sent to Government asking it to stop industrialisation of this area.”

“It’s just common sense to protect the ecosystem that supports the region’s famed tourism industry which sustains the bulk

of jobs there. Scientists are regularly discovering new natural wonders in Exmouth Gulf, and if we look after it, it will generate tourism, education and research jobs for decades to come. It’s time to draw a line in the sand and stop heavy industry from getting a foothold at Ningaloo.”

The Protect Ningaloo campaign understands that instead of risking Exmouth Gulf, Ningaloo, oil and gas pipelines can be deployed offshore as per current practice, or industrialised sites in the Pilbara could also potentially be used, meaning the Subsea 7 proposal for Exmouth Gulf is unnecessary.

“To know that pipelines can be deployed from ships or potentially from industrialised areas in the Pilbara is another reason observers are incredulous that the proposal for Exmouth Gulf ever got off the drawing board.”

“The ball is in Subsea 7’s court. It can withdraw this highly controversial proposal at any time, and should do so now. Subsea 7 could still be doing business in the North West without risking one of our most precious natural and tourism assets. It’s time to end the uncertainty, and protect Beautiful Ningaloo,” Gamblin said.

BP: dump Burrup

BP’s plan for a 20-fold increase in renewable energy generation capacity and 40% reduction in oil and gas production within ten years must include the company’s withdrawal from the Burrup Hub, which will be the most polluting project in Australia’s history if it goes ahead, says the Conservation Council of Western Australia.

Conservation Council spokesperson Maggie Wood said BP’s announcement was welcome and reflected a world shifting away from fossil fuels, but more needs to be done.

“Woodside’s proposed Burrup gas hub is a mega-project involving several joint ventures, including with BP. Over its planned 50-year lifetime, the Burrup Hub will produce more than six billion tonnes of carbon pollution from gas production, export and combustion overseas. That is the equivalent of 11 years of total current carbon emissions from Australia.

“Burrup’s annual production of 139 million tonnes of carbon pollution would be more than four times that of the proposed Adani coal mine, and the equivalent of 35 new coal-fired power stations. This project is totally incompatible with BP’s goals to reduce carbon emissions, and their involvement is becoming increasingly untenable,” she said.

Wood said BP chair Helge Lund’s comment that the company’s new strategy “simply recognises a stark truth” hits the nail on the head.

“Mr Lund is right – the world is on an ‘unsustainable path’. When he says the planet’s ‘carbon budget is running out’, he must recognise that the Burrup Hub would take a huge bite out of that dwindling budget,” she said.

“For every million dollars invested in gas, less than 0.1 jobs are produced. By contrast, investing one million dollars in climate action, including clean energy, creates ten jobs. For every million dollars of sales income the Australian gas industry makes, it creates just 0.4 jobs, while the average for Australian industries is 3.4 jobs per million dollars of sales income. It is simply not worth it.”

Doctors urge climate change action

Australia's peak medical groups, representing around 90,000 or 75% of the nation's doctors have written to Prime Minister Scott Morrison urging him to act on climate change as part of the COVID-19 pandemic economic response, in order to better invest in Australians' health.

Coordinated by Doctors for the Environment Australia, the signatories to the letter represent the nation's GPs, emergency room doctors, physicians, obstetricians, psychiatrists and other disciplines. Many of these professionals are on the frontline of the coronavirus pandemic.

The letter is signed by:

Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA), the Australian Medical Association (AMA), The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM), The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG), Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), College of Intensive Care Medicine (CICM), and Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA).

The letter states, in part:

The world is in the middle of two global health emergencies: the viral pandemic and climate change. As we continue efforts to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, we must ensure that we also have a whole-of-government approach towards addressing climate change, which also has potentially catastrophic health impacts. Carbon pollution and associated global warming will have profound consequences on the fundamentals of human health: clean air, water, access to food and a safe climate.

Associate Professor Linda Selvey, The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) spokesperson and public health physician:

The Australian Government is facing one of the largest public health challenges that Australia, and the world, has experienced in decades.

While COVID-19 poses the most immediate threat to our health, the serious and long-term health impacts of climate change still remain. We have already seen the loss of life and harm to health and livelihoods caused by bushfires, drought, heat and flooding over the last year and the severity of extreme weather events will increase without urgent climate action.

While our Federal Governments direct their resources to tackling the global pandemic in front of us right now, during the recovery phase we need to turn our focus to the public health crisis that is being caused by climate change.

It's vital that climate change and its impacts on public health are central to the Federal Government's COVID-19 recovery plan.

This must include action to reduce our carbon emissions through investment in greener, cleaner energy sources and active and public transport infrastructure, which will also bring health benefits through reduced air pollution and increased physical activity.

The letter highlights this year's unprecedented summer of bushfires and associated smoke pollution which together claimed more than 400 lives, and resulted in the hospitalisation of more than 3000 people for heart and lung problems. The letter also notes the psychological health impacts that are likely to be present for decades.

To reduce carbon emissions, which also worsens air pollution, the letter calls for:

- a transition away from fossil fuels – both coal and gas- to renewable energy;
- investment in projects and technologies that preserve our natural environment ;

- investment in green infrastructure and public transport, which would have the additional benefits of promoting physical activity that would reduce diseases such as obesity and diabetes, and substantially improve air quality.

The letter concludes:

Australia has an unparalleled opportunity to act on climate change and invest in a cleaner, healthier and more prosperous future. We urge the Australian government to ensure that health remains a central focus of all aspects of the COVID-19 economic recovery and to support a healthy transition to a climate resilient economy.

F

Mine "unacceptable" threat to water

The Independent Planning Commission must reject Wollongong Coal's application to expand its Russell Vale coal mine because it would pose an unacceptable risk to Sydney's precious drinking water supply, says Lock the Gate.

Planning Minister Rob Stokes has referred the expansion to the IPC with the requirement that a public hearing

into the proposal be conducted within 12 weeks of receiving the Department's assessment report.

Lock the Gate Alliance NSW spokesperson Nic Clyde said the project should never have reached this point because the company was a "financial basket case".

"Wollongong Coal is likely trading while insolvent, has a multi-billion dollar debt problem, and would struggle to financially cover the rehabilitation of their existing mine site, part of which is underneath Sydney's

drinking water catchment. Wollongong Coal is a train-wreck of a company and the Berejiklian Government should have stripped it of its right to mine years ago," Clyde said..

The company's estimated cost of rehabilitating the Russell Vale colliery is \$215M, while the NSW Government's Resources Regulator requires just \$12.4M in financial assurance. It is not clear what the additional \$202.6M rehabilitation liability is or how it would be funded if Wollongong Coal collapsed.

F

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



Inside the news

FFB was running a day late this week, and so despite a publication date of August 11, she was able to bring you the August 12 news of **Whitehaven's Vickery** coal mine approval.

This unappy story comes as the fossil fuel industry tightens its grip on the **Coalition** government's **Covid-19 economic recovery plan** which is firmly focused on a **gas expansion**. Cartoonist Cathy Wilcox nailed it, as you'll see on page 11. **Labor's** affection for fossil fuels sees it supporting the plan – more on that next week.

Climate change denialists often accuse the **Bureau of Meteorology** (BOM) of fudging climate statistics, but Michaelwest.com.au points out that the BOM is pretty much under control of **fossil fuel linked** bosses (p9).

Woodside Petroleum is in the spotlight for having flogged off a dangerously corroded oil production vessel in the Timor Sea – they even paid a no-hoper company to take it on (p9). The new owner has sunk, meaning we, the **tax-payers**, will likely be up for a **\$200 million bill** to get rid of the thing.

As we wait for the NSW **Independent Planning Commission** to make up its mind on **Santos' Narabri gas project**, the **Australia Institute** has found NSW Planning's assessment of the project riddled with errors (p2) while respected **scientists** call for its rejection (p8).

The destructive nature of **seismic testing** by seabed oil and gas explorers is revealed, after a study found catastrophic effects on species such as whiting, flat-head and crayfish (p7).

Glencore has been hit by the Covid-19 crisis dropping demand for its coal, as well as the Chinese government turning away Australian coal. The company has suspended work at its Hunter Valley mines as a result (p7).

Adani is proceeding with the **Carmichael** coal mine (p6-7) and is also putting its hand up for more mines in **India**, where villages will be destroyed along with forests that are home to elephants and tigers.

fossilfool.com.au

PHICS GREEN PIGEON GRAPHICS GREEN

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

To subscribe free, click here:
<https://knitting-nannas.org/bulletins.php>

Focus Publications

Fossil Fool Bulletin is free to read, but not free to produce. The editor works un-waged, but costs include news subscriptions, computer, software, internet and office expenses.

Donations to publisher **Focus Publications** are invited.

Whether a one-off or regular, **\$5 or \$500**, you can help keep this publication in action.

(Note: donations are not tax deductible.)

Bank details: Focus Publications
BSB: 062 578
Account number: 10343666
ABN: 24857882603

In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 14,590 words of news for your convenience. [Click on the links](#) to view original articles. (Subscriptions may be required)

THE ADANI SAGA

<https://inql.com.au/business/2020/08/04/adani-steels-itself-for-progress-but-still-to-finalise-aurizon-rail-deal/>

Adani steels itself for progress but still to finalise Aurizon rail deal

John McCarthy, In Queensland, 04/08/2020

Adani is planning its first coal production next year but it has yet to reach an agreement with Aurizon over its access to its rail line to the coast.

Adani was yesterday boasting the arrival of the first of 25,000 tonnes of Australian made steel used to create its own section of the rail project that will link with Aurizon's line to the coast.

However, an access agreement appears to be some way off. Aurizon is legally obliged to negotiate third party access to its line but would not comment yesterday because its negotiations must be held in confidence.

Adani said it was progressing arrangements for the connection to the existing rail network.

<https://inql.com.au/business/2020/08/07/adani-digs-deep-into-its-own-pocket-to-dodge-activist-campaign-against-coal-port/>

Adani digs deep into its own pockets to dodge Abbot Point activists

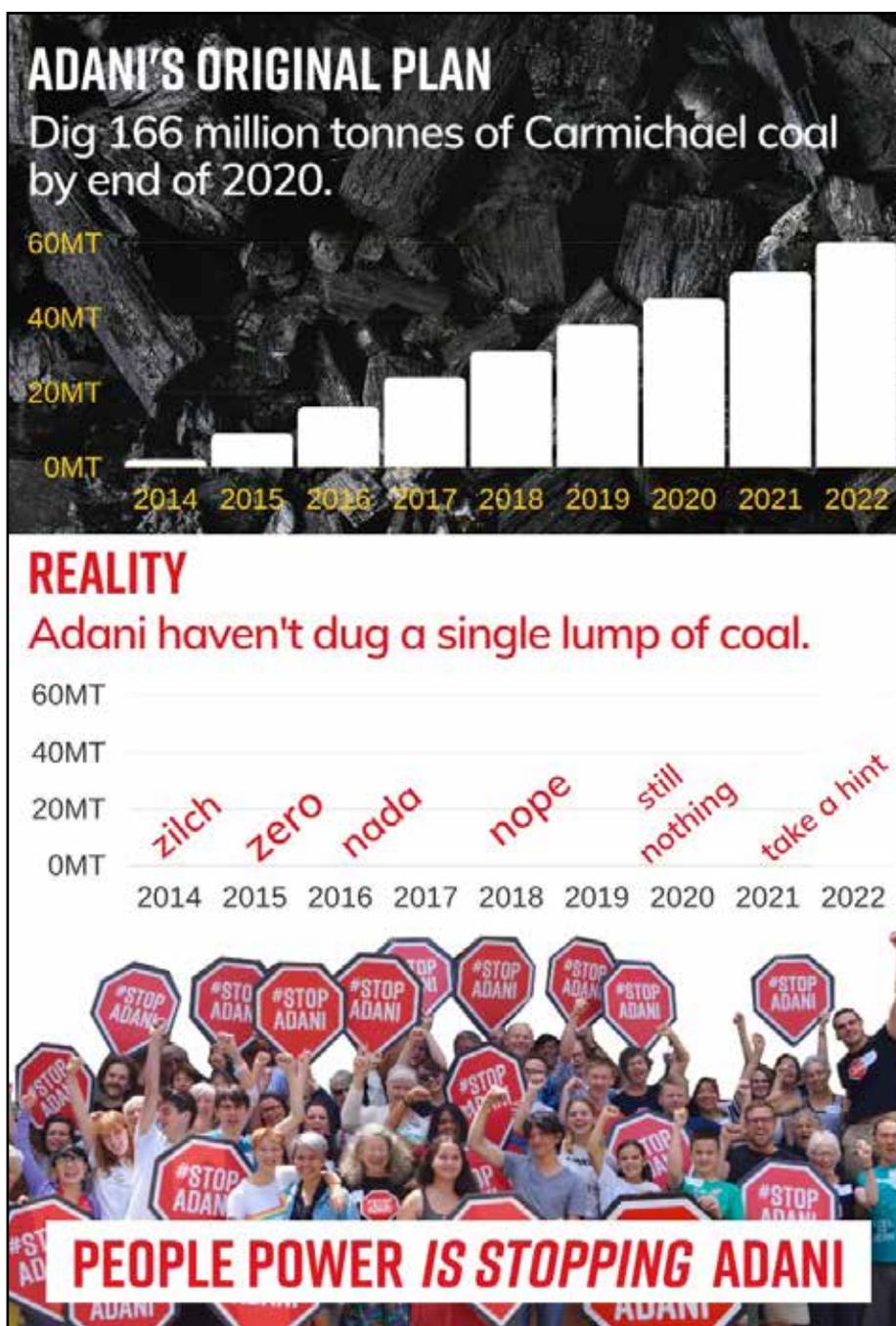
John McCarthy, In Qld, 07/08/2020

Adani appears to have sidestepped an activist campaign to stop it refinancing debt at its Abbot Point coal terminal by dipping into its own pocket in its increasingly expensive fight over its Carmichael coal project.

It's the third time the company has apparently used its own financial muscle to circumvent the activist campaign against it.

It opted to use its own capital to fund the \$2 billion development of the Carmichael mine and earlier this year paid out a \$100 million bond issue over Abbot Point (AAPT). It had a second debt tranche due later this year and activists had been targeting its lenders to prevent a refinancing.

Activist group Market Forces said Standard & Poor's had reported a \$170 million transfer from Adani Singapore to AAPT.



"This news, combined with a statement provided by the Commonwealth Bank to the House Standing Committee on Economics that there is no CBA loan ... to AAPT (and) we have not been asked to extend capital to this project at this time", indicates that the \$170 million AAPT received from Singapore has been used to pay the \$170 million worth of debt owed to CommBank and Westpac, and that these banks did not participate in refinancing that debt," Market Forces said.

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/environment/2020/08/08/could-adani-drop-its-qld-mine-and-head-nsw/159680880010225>

Could Adani drop its Qld mine and head to NSW?

Paddy Manning, Saturday Paper, 08/08/2020

In July, Bloomberg reported Adani was among the low-ball bidders for BHP's massive Mount Arthur thermal coalmine in the New South Wales Hunter Valley, which remains on the market. The significance of the bid was underappreciated: Adani's new mining chief, David Boshoff, who joined the

company in November, previously ran the Mount Arthur operation.

Tim Buckley of IEEFA has prepared a 33-page financial report, which suggests the deal could suit both companies. “Go back to first principles,” he says. “Adani needs coal.”

Adani has three coastal coal-fired power stations under construction in India that are unable to source domestic coal supplies and will therefore skirt a national ban on imports. The company could meet its objectives by buying the Mount Arthur mine and getting out of the Galilee Basin altogether.

In Australia both Carmichael and Abbot Point – which was once profitable, but now looks risky, and Adani has repeatedly tried to sell it off – are looking like stranded assets. “What we’re dealing with is a 10-year-stale decision to tip \$5 billion down the drain buying the world’s largest unbuilt thermal coalmine,” Buckley says.

“[Adani] regrets it, I have absolutely no doubt. It’s one of the dumbest corporate decisions he’s made.”

While BHP has Mount Arthur on its books at nearly a billion dollars, it may be prepared to sell for less – particularly because it faces a potentially enormous rehabilitation bill.

At a certain point, Adani will have spent so much money on Carmichael that it simply has to go ahead. “Every month that goes past, the balance tips in favour of Carmichael proceeding,” Buckley says.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/08/india-prime-minister-narendra-modi-plans-to-fell-ancient-forest-to-create-40-new-coal-fields>

India plans to fell ancient forest to create 40 new coalfields

Hannah Ellis-Petersen, Guardian, 08/08/2020

Under a new “self-reliant India” plan by the prime minister, Narendra Modi, to boost the economy post-Covid-19 and reduce costly imports, 40 new coalfields in some of India’s most ecologically sensitive forests are to be opened up for commercial mining.

The coal industry in India is state-owned, but this auction of 40 new coal blocks will see the creation of a privatised, commercial coal sector in India. Among those bidding for it are India’s rich and powerful industrial giants, including the \$14bn Adani group run by the Indian billionaire Gautam Adani, who operates India’s

largest coal power plants and has close ties to Modi.

Five villages will be destroyed and more than 6,000 mainly indigenous people displaced, as well as thousands of hectares of trees, torn down for mines and roads.

Among the prominent opponents to the project is the former environment minister, Jairan Ramesh, who also wrote a letter to Modi condemning coal auctions.

“Adani is behind this,” claims Ramesh. “He is one of the most influential forces on the government.”

The Adani group rejected the allegations as baseless and politically motivated.

COAL ROCKS ON

<https://www.macarthuradvertiser.com.au/story/6863668/mine-owners-make-massive-changes-to-tahmoor-coal-mining-expansion-plan/>

Mine owners make “massive changes” to Tahmoor coal mining expansion plan

Kayla Osborne, MacArthur Advertiser, 04/08/2020

Longwall mines will no longer be constructed underneath Bargo in new plans released by SIMEC Tahmoor Coking Coal today.

The mining company has substantially revised its plan for the proposed Tahmoor South Coal Project in response to feedback received from the community and government agencies.

SIMEC has decided to remove from its plans two longwall mines that were to be located under the Bargo township, in order to significantly reduce subsidised effects.

The removal of these proposed longwalls will reduce the number of dwellings that would have been mined under by more than 80%.

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/glencore-to-suspend-hunter-valley-coal-mines-as-china-restricts-exports-20200807-p55j1w.html>

Glencore to suspend Hunter Valley coal mines as China restricts imports

Nick Toscano, SMH, 07/08/2020

Swiss-based mining giant Glencore will suspend several coal mines across the Hunter Valley in New South Wales for at least two weeks as the coronavirus pandemic and Chinese government policies to avoid Australian coal cargoes hit demand for the commodity.

Glencore on Friday said the site and equipment shutdowns, which would

coincide with September school holidays, were necessary in order to wind back output volumes and manage the severe impact on demand. Workers would be required to take annual leave over this time.

While unofficial limits are often imposed in China as away to support its domestic miners, a souring of diplomatic relations between Canberra and Beijing this year over calls for a coronavirus inquiry prompted the Chinese government to instruct state-owned utilities to avoid Australian coal in particular – favouring Indonesian or Russian cargoes instead.

OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-04/whiting-catch-down-because-of-seismic-testing/12502930>

Seismic surveying reduces whiting catch rate by 99.5%, research finds

Rio Davis, ABC, 04/08/2020

New research into the effects of seismic surveying on fish catch rates has found the near-total depletion of whiting in affected areas.

Key points:

- Catch rates for whiting were down 95% in areas affected by seismic surveying
- The regulator, NOPSEMA, is assessing whether the company responsible is doing enough to compensate fishers
- The industry association for trawl fishers says 25 fishers have had their incomes destroyed without fair payment

Mapping companies use loud blasts to survey the seabed for oil and gas reserves and sell the data to oil and gas companies.

Flathead catch was also reduced by 71%, according to the research.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/origin-energy-employs-ai-for-well-risks/news-story/416178f95255cfabb112ac59783be63>

Origin Energy employs AI for well risks

Perry Williams, Aus, 04/08/2020

Origin Energy has developed an artificial intelligence system for its sprawling Queensland coal seam gas operations that allows it to predict the risk of faults in over 2200 wells, as part of a goal to boost production at its Australia Pacific LNG project.

The Sydney-based energy producer, which operates the gas fields for APLNG, has been trying to improve its

understanding of why certain wells would struggle to restart after the gas system had been closed for either maintenance or an unplanned shutdown.

Its data scientists fed over 4700 historical well “events” into a machine learning model which then ranks 27 different features based on the chances they would contribute to a well failure.

After shutdown, the average risk of a well failing upon start-up was 13%, Origin data showed.

The AI system, developed internally at Origin, is now able to select wells with an average 5% risk of failure, according to Aleta Nicoll, who runs Origin’s Brisbane central control room which manages the flow of APLNG gas.

With 2205 operated wells under the watch of the Brisbane control room, an added perk is the ability of the AI system to analyse the entire supply network simultaneously, compared with a worker who at best might be able to assess 30 wells a day. Some 880 individual data points are now fed into the control system for each well every 30 seconds.

<https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/6864956/push-to-reroute-gas-pipeline-project-knocked-back-by-council/>

Liverpool Plains Shire Council knocks back motion to push to reroute Hunter-Queensland Gas Pipeline Project

Billy Jupp, Northern Daily Leader, 06/08/2020

A push to try and reroute the Queensland-Hunter Gas Pipeline Project has been knocked back by Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

The motion urged the council to consult with the NSW Department of Industry and Environment (DPIE) about the potential to reroute the pipeline further away from the town’s water supply.

Councillor Virginia Black put forward the motion after several concerns regarding water security were raised by the community.

However, Cr Hope, who voted against the motion, said any further negotiations on the project’s route would be up to the affected landholders and the company.

fossilfool.com.au

• Every edition of Fossil Fool Bulletin
• Feature stories • Links • Subscribe



Santos boss Kevin Gallagher. Photo: Mitchell Woolnough/ABC

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-08/scientist-says-risks-too-high-for-coal-seam-gas-in-narrabri/12530152>

Santos coal-seam gas project at Narrabri not worth the risk, scientist says

Sean Murphy, ABC, 08/08/2020

One of Australia’s most respected scientists has claimed the Narrabri coal-seam gas project poses too great a risk to the region’s water, people and environment.

John Williams is a founding member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, which was established in 2002 to campaign for sustainable development and water reform.

He is a former head of CSIRO’s Land and Water division, a New South Wales Land and Environment Commissioner and is currently an emeritus professor and research associate at the Australian National University.

Dr Williams has cast doubt on the \$3.6-billion Santos project as it enters the last phase of a state approvals process spanning almost four years.

Dr Williams said not enough was known about fractures and faults in rock formations separating the deep coal seams, from which gas would be extracted, and shallow groundwater aquifers, which are crucial for domestic and agricultural water supplies.

There was a risk the aquifers could be contaminated or run dry.

“I personally don’t think it is worth the risk,” Dr Williams said.

“I don’t think the current analysis is anywhere sufficient [enough] to give you confidence that there is low level of risk.”

He said even the oil and gas company Santos admitted to uncertainties in

its own scientific assessment of the project.

“There are many things where the report has been quite honest and says, ‘We don’t know but we’ll proceed and hope it works out,’” he said.

“That’s not good enough.”

Planning department director David Kitto said an independent panel of water experts had identified uncertainties about the geology and hydrogeology of the gas field, but found these could be managed with robust monitoring and regulation.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/narrabri-gas-project-should-be-blocked-says-ex-chief-scientist-20200809-p55k20.html>

Narrabri Gas Project should be blocked, says ex-chief scientist

Nick O’Malley, SMH, 10/08/2020

The proposed Narrabri gas project in the state’s north-west is at odds with the nation’s Paris climate commitments and the state government’s goal of cutting emissions to net zero by 2050, said former chief scientist Penny Sackett.

The plan by Santos to drill 850 gas wells should be rejected, Professor Sackett said in a submission to the Independent Planning Commission.

According to her submission to the planning commission, written on behalf of the NSW Environmental Defenders Office, the Narrabri Gas Project alone would burn through 11% of the state’s carbon budget if it is to do its part to meet Paris targets.

“The Project will add about 5 MtCO₂ [million tonnes of greenhouse gasses] annually to Australia’s direct emissions at a time when Australia needs to find

about 7.5 MtCO₂ new reduction every year to meet its 2030 goal, as well as maintaining the reductions found in previous years,” writes Professor Sackett.

“About 50% of Australian gas reserves must remain in the ground to achieve a 2°C [global warming] scenario. Thus, approval of new fossil fuel development or expansion is incompatible with keeping global warming to 2°C, and will ‘lock in’ emissions and warming far beyond the end of mining operations.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/aug/09/calls-for-woodside-to-pay-200m-to-clean-up-moribund-timor-sea-oil-site-it-ran-until-2016>

Calls for Woodside to pay \$200m to clean up moribund Timor Sea oil site it ran until 2016

Adam Morton, *Guardian*, 09/08/2020

Energy giant Woodside Petroleum is facing calls to pay more than \$200m to clean up a moribund oil production site in the Timor Sea, after a government review recommended past owners of offshore facilities should be made liable for remediation costs.

Woodside operated the Northern Endeavour oil production ship, permanently moored about 550 kilometres north-west of Darwin, from 1999 until 2016. It announced the site would close, but then paid the newly incorporated group Northern Oil and Gas Australia (Noga) \$24m to take it over.

After three years of disrupted production, the national safety regulator ordered work stop in July 2019, warning corrosion at the site had the potential to cause “multiple fatalities”. The shutdown led to Noga entering voluntary administration in September and liquidation in February.

As the ship sits in commonwealth waters, the Morrison government was forced to step in to ensure safety at the site. It signed a contract with Upstream Petroleum Services to maintain the ship, and potentially took on decommissioning and remediation liability, which Woodside estimated could be \$230m.

Tim Beshara, the federal policy director at the Wilderness Society, said the government should urgently introduce trailing liability laws “to protect the taxpayer from further debacles like this”. No new oil and gas developments should be approved until there had been an industry-wide audit of liability risk and new laws were in place, he said.



The Northern Endeavour, described as a rust-bucket, has become a government liability after Woodside Petroleum off-loaded it to a company which has now gone broke. The oil production ship, floating in the Timor Sea, is too dangerous to operate. Photo: Oil & Gas Journal

“The right thing for Woodside to do here is to write a cheque to the Australian taxpayer,” he said. “It’s clear from this report that the mess started when Woodside offloaded their rust-bucket to a company that history has shown was not able to deliver on the responsibilities Woodside had promised would be met.”

A Woodside spokesperson said the company did not accept it should be liable for the clean-up.

The Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association’s chief executive, Andrew McConville, said it did not support trailing liability, and the problems highlighted by the Northern Endeavour experience could be dealt with through other measures.

CLIMATE CRISIS

<https://www.michaelwest.com.au/bureau-of-meteorology-under-pressure-to-toe-the-coalition-line-on-climate-change/>

Bureau of Meteorology: under pressure to toe the Coalition line on climate change?

Sandi Keane, *Michaelwest.com.au*, 07/08/2020

Since the days of the Howard government, effective action on climate change has been held hostage by the big polluters’ stranglehold on policy.

Last week’s leaked report from the National Covid-19 Coordination Commission Manufacturing Taskforce comes as no surprise from a commission stacked with executives

from the gas and mining lobbies. Its recommendations are a bonanza for the fossil fuel industry and a chilling harbinger of the nightmare to come if, courtesy of the taxpayer, Big Gas is unleashed across our prime farmland.

But are supposedly independent, government-funded organisations also coming under pressure to toe the government line?

After receiving tip-offs from former Bureau of Meteorology employees, Michael West Media conducted further investigation and found some disturbing evidence of the BoM suppressing the role of climate change.

According to one of our sources – who wishes to remain anonymous – forecasters were regularly told “not to attribute individual events to climate change”.

“It’s just a convenient tagline that we can’t attribute climate change to any one weather or seasonal event,” according to another source who explained further: “It has now expired. Scientists within can use methods to credibly attribute events ... I witnessed climate change censorship and suppression many, many times.

“From the pre-fire season briefings to the aftermath assessments, climate change discussion was being suppressed in all public dialogue from federal and state government, including the Bureau...

“If the science is alarming then the public need to be alarmed as that is the

point of having an ‘apolitical, unbiased scientific agency with utmost integrity’ or so we would all hope.”

A check on who is in charge at the Bureau of Meteorology reveals strong links to the coal seam gas industry.

CEO and director of meteorology Dr Andrew Johnson and chief customer officer Dr Peter Stone both held executive posts at CSIRO, which was a partner with Big Gas in the joint research venture the Gas Industry Social and Economic Research Alliance (GISERA).

According to his LinkedIn page, Dr Johnson was also chairman of IESC (the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development) from 2012 to 2017.

He joined the bureau of Meteorology in 2016 while still at IESC.

The bureau’s CCO Dr Stone was deputy chief Ecosystem Sciences at CSIRO, from 2009-2013. Dr Stone established GISERA in 2011 and directed it until 2013 before joining BoM in 2017.

GISERA recently conducted research into the impact of hydraulic fracking in Queensland’s Surat Basin to address “community concerns about the potential environmental impacts”. Its March 2020 report found “little to no impacts” from fracking on “air quality, soils, groundwater and waterways”.

The response from scientists last month was swingeing. Professor Ian Lowe accused the report of “failing the pub test” because just six gas wells out of the 19,000 across the state were tested.

Professor Penny Sackett, Australia’s former chief scientist, was scathing about the choice of sites:

“The report was essentially conducted on behalf of the gas industry, funded primarily by the gas industry, with sites chosen by the gas industry.”

In a 2015 interview with SBS about the effects of coal seam gas, GISERA’s former founder and director, Dr Stone (now BoM’s CCO), spoke about “low” risk of water contamination. More on his links to CSG can be found on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

While BoM correctly focuses on factors that contributed to our catastrophic bushfires, such as record-breaking temperatures, floods and droughts, is it failing to serve the public interest by not clearly identifying climate change as a contributing factor?

<https://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/two-global-health-emergencies-doctors-group-backs-green-stimulus-20200810-p55kd1.html>

Two global health emergencies: doctors group backs green stimulus

Nick O’Malley, SMH, 11/08/2020

Peak medical groups representing about 75% of Australia’s 90,000 doctors have written to the prime minister to ask him to make a response to climate change central to the government’s post-coronavirus economic stimulus plans.

The groups have called on the government to redirect funds from fossil fuel subsidies in stimulus efforts to renewable energy projects and infrastructure to promote walking, cycling and public transport.

The letter comes after a similar appeal sent on Monday by finance and industry heavyweights, including the big four banks and major corporations, also urging the government to make “sustainable investments” in areas such as health, education, clean energy and urban infrastructure as it helps rebuild the economy.

On the advice of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission, the government has been advocating for a gas-led recovery on the grounds that cheaper energy would help stimulate manufacturing in Australia.

FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://www.cairnspost.com.au/news/national/manufacturing-overhaul-should-create-half-a-million-highly-paid-jobs-says-covid19-recovery-adviser/news-story/5fc4bf68318590118df16419ce122856>

Manufacturing overhaul should create half a million highly paid jobs, says COVID-19 recovery adviser

Claire Bickers, Advertiser, 05/08/2020

Half a million highly paid jobs could be created in the next five years if the nation radically transforms its manufacturing industry, with South Australia set to be the “epicentre” for defence and space, a key adviser to Scott Morrison’s COVID-19 recovery commission says.

A bigger, more hi-tech manufacturing sector will inject billions of dollars into the economy, according to former Dow Chemical chief executive Andrew Liveris, who has advised US presidents Donald Trump and Barack Obama.

“In South Australia, there’s no question you should be the epicentre of defence (and) space industry capability,” Liveris said.

The taskforce analysed several hi-tech manufacturing sectors that Australia

could compete in globally and that could be split across the country.

It is understood they included mining technology, defence and space, medical technology, food and agricultural technology, recycling and packaging and renewable energy technology.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/crossbenchers-condemn-government-s-plans-for-a-gas-led-recovery-20200804-p55ii9.html>

Crossbenchers condemn government’s plans for a gas-led recovery

Nick O’Malley, SMH, 05/08/2020

Federal crossbenchers have criticised the Australian government’s plan for a taxpayer funded gas-led economic recovery, as recommended by the Prime Minister’s COVID-19 advisory body, because it is out of step with Australia’s Paris climate commitments.

Independent MPs Zali Steggall, Andrew Wilkie and Helen Haines issued a signed statement with Greens leader Adam Bandt citing research from the University of Melbourne that predicted the cumulative economic damage of Australia failing to keep temperature increases below 2 degrees to be \$2.7 trillion.

Steggall said she was concerned that special advisors to the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission were not being required to declare conflicts of interest given the “clear direction” the NCCC was taking on gas.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/morrison-prepares-a-gas-plan-to-boost-economy-out-of-the-pandemic-20200807-p55jop.html>

Morrison prepares a gas plan to boost economy out of the pandemic

David Crowe, SMH, 07/08/2020

Gas projects will gain federal support to drive down energy costs for industry and households in what Prime Minister Scott Morrison calls a broader plan to lift the economy through the pandemic.

Morrison backed the use of gas to help Australian industry solve its energy challenges, signalling he would act “in the months ahead” to tackle the problems caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Three cabinet ministers are working on ways to cut gas prices, raising the prospect of measures in the October budget to address years of industry calls to boost domestic gas supplies.

Morrison said the “energy challenges” were a factor in his goal of running



Cartoonist Cathy Wilcox nails it!

the national economy in a “COVID-safe” way when there was no certainty about when a vaccine might arrive and the pandemic might end.

“I have talked a lot of times about what we need do in the gas sector and I’ll have a lot more to say about that in the months ahead,” he said.

“What we’re doing in our manufacturing sector, what we’re doing to get infrastructure, getting almost \$10 billion brought forward – that’s the plan.

Greens leader Adam Bandt has attacked the government for backing new gas projects, following a series of leaks from the National COVID Commission chaired by Nev Power, former chief executive of Fortescue Metals.

The commission’s manufacturing taskforce set out plans to put taxpayer support behind a significant expansion of the domestic gas industry.

“Gas is not only a toxic fossil fuel, it’s becoming too expensive to compete with clean energy,” Bandt said.

“More and more, industrial users are keen to make the switch to renewable energy, but are being hamstrung by a government desperate to prop up dirty coal, oil and gas.”

Industry Minister Karen Andrews, Resources Minister Keith Pitt and Energy Minister Angus Taylor are all working on the gas and energy agenda with a team from the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-10/clp-launches-2020-nt-election-campaign-at-darwin-water-front/12539424>

CLP launched 2020 NT election campaign in Darwin with support from Deputy PM

Steve Vivian, ABC, 10/08/2020

Opposition Leader Lia Finocchiaro said a Country Liberals government would fix the Northern Territory’s “dire” economy, “disgraceful” debt and “out-of-control” crime if elected at the August 22 election.

Finocchiaro will lead the CLP into the election attempting to take back power after the party’s landslide loss in 2016 left it with just two seats in Parliament.

Finocchiaro said a future CLP government would support the on-shore gas industry, implement an “approvals fast-track taskforce” to slash approval timeframes across government by 50% and establish the office of “Territory Coordinator” to work with the private sector to accelerate large-scale projects.

<https://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/news/national/labor-promises-to-implement-final-fracking-recommendations/news-story/22f53e5904148f16975477beb64f1a2c>

Labor promises to implement final fracking recommendations

Natasha Emeck, NT News, 11/08/2020

Territory Labor has pledged to implement the remaining recommendations of the Pepper Inquiry — or the Independent Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the NT — if re-elected.

If re-elected on August 22, Territory Labor has said it would continue the government’s Resourcing the Territory initiative of \$26m over four years (2018-2022), and implement the remaining recommendations of the Pepper Inquiry to ensure risks associated with an onshore petroleum industry are minimised.



The block contains the logo for Desmog, which features a stylized figure holding a megaphone above the word "DESMOG". Below the logo is the tagline "CLEARING THE PR POLLUTION THAT CLOUDS CLIMATE SCIENCE" and the website URL "https://www.desmogblog.com/".

fossilfool.com.au

FOCUS
Publications

Fossil Fool Bulletin is published Tuesdays (in your email Wednesday).
<https://knitting-nannas.org/bulletins.php>
SIGN UP for your FREE subscription
 Past issues available to download

SAVING THE LAND, AIR AND WATER FOR THE KIDDIES
www.knitting-nannas.com

The block features the text "SAVING THE LAND, AIR AND WATER FOR THE KIDDIES" and the website "www.knitting-nannas.com". To the right is a small illustration of a yellow skull with two crossed sticks or sticks of dynamite.