

chain reaction

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VICTORY!

VICTORIA'S UNCONVENTIONAL GAS BAN

Who will pay for the damage of new mega-mines?

Fossil fuel divestment and the tertiary education sector – Jack Bertolus

The future of Latrobe Valley: Community leadership on Just Transition

Seven ways the Trans Pacific Partnership threatens people and the planet

The great corporate takeover of our food



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Edition #128 – November 2016

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1

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Vale Dr Bill Williams: campaigner for peace, justice, health and equity

Friends of the Earth were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Dr Bill Williams in September. Our deepest sympathy and love to Gisela, Daisy and Lily. Here we reprint part of a longer tribute by Tilman Ruff, one of Bill's closest collaborators in the bid to rid the world of nuclear weapons:

It is a time of deep sorrow for the many who knew and loved the remarkable Dr Bill Williams. Brimming with life and love, surfing most days, fit and muscular, ten days from turning 58, his second grandchild due any day, Bill went to bed normally on Sunday 11 September, and did not wake up. Bill is survived by his wife Gisela Gardener, daughters Daisy and Lily, and grandsons Remy and Archie Bill – who entered the world five days after Bill departed it, his mother Judith and brothers Timothy, Mark, Nicholas and Tony and their families.

The middle son of five boys, Bill's father Hugh was a GP in Geelong; his grandfather was also a GP, in Melbourne. In 1979 Bill took a year away from medical study and travelled in South America, working in primary health care.

Later he went to Zimbabwe, delivering babies in war-torn hospitals and witnessing the terrible burden of preventable deaths of children.

After training in Melbourne and London, Bill spent much of the 1990s working in Central Australia, especially at the Pintupi Homelands Health Service, where he continued to help out periodically even this year, forging deep and abiding bonds of understanding and friendship.

Bill published three books: *Men: sex, power and survival* (written with Gisela Gardener, 1989), *Kumanjayi's Country* (1999), and *Bleed* (2015), about Gisela's life-threatening brain hemorrhage in 2011 and their remarkable shared journey of medicine, resilience and love through her recovery.

Bill helped found and build the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), and served magnificently as chair of ICAN Australia. This campaign, which started in Melbourne, now has 440 partner organisations in 98 countries, and is the leading dedicated civil society campaign worldwide working for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. For over 30 years, Bill was a stalwart of the Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW), the Australian affiliate of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). He served as MAPW president and international councillor.

Bill was the best communicator in the land for MAPW and ICAN. He has spoken medical truth to power around the country, and especially met and talked with indigenous communities around Australia and recently in Greenland, facing the



Bill Williams at the Palm Sunday rally in Melbourne, April 2007.

onslaught of nuclear test legacy, mining of uranium, and proposed imposition of radioactive waste.

I had the privilege of working closely with Bill for much of the last 30 years; as sounding board, go-to person, confidant and partner in work to eradicate the greatest threat to planetary health, nuclear weapons, he was a pure treasure. Together we could convince the IPPNW International Council meeting in Helsinki in 2006 to unanimously support ICAN as the central priority and vehicle for the federation's core work for nuclear weapons eradication.

At a special UN Working Group in Geneva in May, Bill was able to witness the growing support among governments the world over for banning nuclear weapons. A historic proposal for negotiations to start next year on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons is now before the UN General Assembly, and will be voted on at the end of this month [the First Committee of the UN General Assembly voted to support the resolution on October 27]. Bill played no small part in getting it there. Our most fitting tribute to Bill will be to re-double our efforts to ban and eradicate the scourge of nuclear weapons from the face of this good Earth.

Tilman's full tribute is posted at: <https://croakey.org/vale-dr-bill-williams-tireless-worker-campaigner-for-peace-justice-health-equity/>

See also Senator Scott Ludlam's speech in Parliament: <http://scott-ludlam.greensmps.org.au/content/speeches-parliament/remembering-dr-bill-williams>

A tribute by James Massola and Dave Sweeney, published in the Fairfax Press, is posted at:

www.smb.com.au/comment/obituaries/bill-williams-passionate-for-improved-health-outcomes-for-aboriginal-people-20160921-grkyev.html

Bill sketched out his life's work in a bio-note for his book 'Bleed':

<https://billwilliamsbleed.com/about-the-author/>

Friends of the Earth (FoE) Australia is a federation of independent local groups.

You can join FoE by contacting your local group – see the inside back cover of Chain Reaction for contact details or visit foe.org.au/local-groups

There is a monthly FoE Australia email newsletter – subscribe via the website: www.foe.org.au

To financially support our work, please visit foe.org.au/donate

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Anti-nuclear campaign update

Fighting the SA government's plan to turn the state into the world's high level nuclear waste dump has been incredibly challenging over the past 18 months, but the campaign is slowly turning in our favour. A rally in Adelaide on October 15 attracted 3,000 people and there's a fantastic video which is worth checking out (www.vimeo.com/187622136). That rally was part of a National Day of Action against the imposition of nuclear waste dumps on unwilling Aboriginal communities - there were also events in Melbourne (organised by FoE), Sydney, Toowoomba, Alice Springs, Perth and elsewhere.

The major parties are getting nervous about rising public opposition to the high level nuclear waste dump plan, trade unions are coming out in opposition, and Traditional Owners are fighting hard - see their many statements at www.anfa.org.au/traditional-owners-statements.

Friends of the Earth (FoE) has been heavily involved in the campaign - we've been actively supporting Traditional Owners, producing detailed reports and submissions, and we were

invited 'witnesses' speaking at three sessions of the SA government-initiated Citizens' Jury. For more information see www.foe.org.au/import-waste.

FoE campaigners have also been busy supporting Adnyamathanha Traditional Owners in their campaign to stop the federal government imposing a national nuclear waste dump on their land in the Flinders Ranges. In October, we helped organise a camp-out in the Flinders Ranges to help build the campaign. There was also a well-attended protest in the small town of Hawker, the closest town to the proposed dump site. To keep in touch with this campaign, join the facebook group 'Fight To Stop Nuclear Waste Dump In Flinders Ranges SA'. Apart from our campaign work on this issue, FoE has also produced detailed reports discussing the options for management of Australia's radioactive waste - see www.foe.org.au/waste.

FoE Melbourne's Anti-nuclear & Clean Energy (ACE) collective is holding an art auction fundraiser on Friday, November 25 - please see the back cover of this edition of *Chain Reaction* for details.

Adelaide protest against nuclear waste dumps, October 15.





Unregulated pesticide use is putting me and my food sources at risk!

#PollutionFreeWaterways

TELL JOSH FRYDENBERG TO TAKE ACTION NOW!

#PollutionFreeWaterways

In September 2016 Friends of the Earth produced the report, *Pesticides in Australian Waterways Overview*. Author Anthony Amis uncovered the fact that almost 200 of the pesticides detected are not listed within the ecological regulations of the Australian guidelines. These chemicals are putting creatures like the platypus - and even the worms, shrimp and yabbies that it feeds upon - at risk.

Australia's ecological guidelines for waterways, the ANZECC Guidelines, have not been updated since the year 2000 - and FoE thinks it is time for an update. We need your help to make sure that these pesticides are regulated. Adding these dangerous pesticides to the guidelines means that acceptable limits will be set, and monitoring will occur to ensure that regulatory bodies and community groups can keep an eye on our irreplaceable ecosystems. It also means that those who pollute our waterways will be easier to track down and made to pay for their mess.

FoE has launched the #PollutionFreeWaterways campaign on the back of Anthony's report. Please send an email to federal Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg asking him to urgently update the ANZECC guidelines to include all pesticides listed in the recent Friends of the Earth report.

Details are posted at: www.melbourne.foe.org.au/pollution_free_waterways

See also #PollutionFreeWaterways, and www.facebook.com/hashtag/pollutionfreewaterways

Anthony Amis, September 2016, 'Pesticides in Australian Waterways Overview: A Jigsaw with a Billion Missing Pieces', www.foe.org.au/sites/default/files/Pesticides%20Detections%20in%20Australian%20Waterways.pdf

Victoria: Take action to support the transition

Reports in the media have suggested the Hazelwood coal-fired power station could be closed as soon as April next year. Hazelwood is the biggest carbon emitter in the national electricity market (NEM) and produces a quarter of Victoria's electricity. There is plenty of electricity supply in the NEM and Hazelwood's closure will help create space for new renewable energy. If Engie does announce closure, the key issue now will be what happens to the workers at Hazelwood, and the businesses that rely on them.

Both levels of government, and the companies that have made so much profit from burning coal, need to fund a profound transformation of the Latrobe Valley economy. There is no 'silver bullet' which will solve the problems of job losses but there are many good ideas to create jobs and opportunity in the Valley. The Andrews government has already committed \$40 million to economic diversification. But a lot more is needed - a minimum of \$100 million in each of the next two state budgets to put the transition on a solid footing.

Some top-order ideas:

- Fund the Earthworker Co-operative's solar hot water technology factory in the Latrobe Valley.
- Fund the Transition Centre proposed by Voices of the Valley (see Kate Wattchow's article on p.21)
- Rehabilitate the mine pits. This is expected to generate 150 to 200 jobs in the short term. This could take up to a decade and cost at least \$300 million.
- Fund the Latrobe Valley geothermal energy investigation to test whether it will be commercially viable.
- Upgrade the rail link between Melbourne and the Valley. As coal power starts to close and air quality improves, the Valley can become a growth area for Melbourne once transport links are improved.
- A home energy efficiency retrofit program for Gippsland.
- Commercial building energy efficiency programs.
- Sustainable prefabricated housing construction.

To support this important campaign work please visit: www.melbourne.foe.org.au/take_action_to_support_the_transition

Have your say on the Trans Pacific Partnership

In the lead-up to the US election in November, it is crucial that the Australian parliament take action to prevent ratification of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) should President Obama succeed in forcing a lame-duck vote. Both the Australian Senate and the Lower House have the opportunity to vote against enabling legislation, which will likely be tabled later this year, effectively countering attempts to ratify the agreement.

The dangers of the Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism are well-documented, however, both major parties continue to support the TPP despite its inclusion - and Federal Trade Minister Steven Ciobo, who was sworn in to the position in July this year, has

proved himself to be as staunchly pro-TPP as his predecessor Andrew Robb.

This is a crucial time in the campaign to make our voices heard, as without undergoing the ratification process Australia cannot enter into the agreement. With this in mind, we ask you to phone or email Minister Ciobo calling on him to refuse to ratify the TPP unless ISDS is removed from the agreement: ph. (07) 5504 6000, email: Steven.Ciobo.MP@aph.gov.au

Bill Warren outlines some of the problems with the TPP in his article on page 30 of this edition of *Chain Reaction*. See also www.foe.org.au/trade-and-corporates and www.melbourne.foe.org.au/economic_justice



Vegan masterclass

FoE Melbourne's Food Co-op ran the latest in its series of vegan masterclasses on October 30. The masterclass looked at all things Lebanese and was led by Middle Eastern cooking connoisseur Mich Zeitoun from Beirut. Mich cooked dishes from his childhood, with recipes passed down from his grandmother, including baba gannouj (cooked eggplant with tahini), mkloubeh arnabeet (cauliflower cooked with rice, onions and spices), mjaddarah (lentils cooked with caramelised onions and rice), and arnabeet bi thini (baked cauliflower with tahini and pine nuts). Yum.

Make the switch to a fossil fuel-free bank

Did you know that ANZ, Commbank, NAB and Westpac are making significant profits on interest gained from home loans each year and then using these profits to fund the fossil fuel industry?

If you bank with one of the big four, one of the most powerful things that you can do as an individual is to make a shift to another bank. This sends a clear message to the banks that we will not continue to allow them to fund dirty energy on our dollar. This shift also ensures a massive future income loss to the big four which would be otherwise generated via your personal home loan with them.

By transferring your loan to Bank Australia, Friends of the Earth will receive a financial contribution (a one-off payment of 0.04% of the loan value, this won't affect your interest rate, fees or loan) which will go towards funding our current and future campaigns.

For more information and to make the switch, visit:

www.marketforces.org.au/banks/home-loan-switch

www.bankaustralia.com.au/foe



Docs and nurses caring for our planet

An update from Healthy Futures volunteer Jacqui Dunn. Healthy Futures is an affiliate of Friends of the Earth that empowers health professionals and community members to tackle climate change.

Healthy Futures ran a wonderful volunteer training day on July 24, attended by 23 people from such diverse backgrounds as medicine, nursing, science and journalism, as well as students.

The training focused on helping us to become great environmental advocates by having effective conversations about the need for our super funds to divest from fossil fuels, how to give presentations and recruit friends to help us in our campaign work, and finally by helping us to focus on what we could take back to our workplaces and places of study after the training day.

This training day empowered new Healthy Futures volunteers Irma and Sandy to present to their nursing colleagues at work and collect 16 divestment petition signatures. It also built my confidence in presenting on behalf of Healthy Futures at the Fossil Free Deakin University campaign launch on August 3 alongside representatives from 350.org and Market Forces.

Healthy Futures volunteers had a great day at a petition blitz outside the Royal Women's Hospital on August 29, where we were able to hone those divestment conversation skills from our training day. Our co-ordinator Harry Jennens also spruiked our divestment campaigns on 3CR's *Dirt Radio* program on the same day.

Healthy Futures volunteers attended the Global Ideas Forum at Melbourne Uni on September 3-4 to chat with like-minded

individuals about climate change and the need for our super funds to divest from fossil fuels.

We'll also soon be launching a campaign inviting our supporters to sign letters to the Victorian government calling for an ambitious Victorian emissions reduction target for 2020. More news to follow regarding this initiative - keep an eye on our website and facebook page.

Healthy Futures is a diverse organisation of friendly, motivated individuals with a shared concern for the health of our planet. If you'd like to learn more about our campaigns or join us for an event check us out at www.healthyfutures.net.au and www.facebook.com/HealthyFuturesAU

Jacqui Dunn is a volunteer for a Healthy Futures and a nurse at Monash Health.

On the afternoon of Sunday September 4, FoE Brisbane Climate Frontlines joined up with 350 Brisbane folks to host a “Pray for Our Pacific” event on the Picnic Island Green at South Bank Parklands. This was in response to a global call-out from 350 folks in the Pacific to pray for climate justice and #standupforthepacific.

The message for the event was framed as follows: “It’s important that we use our faith to empower ourselves and this movement. We aren’t looking to our faith as a way to solve the issue of climate change, but we are looking to our faith to find the strength to continue the fight to protect the planet that was gifted to us.”

www.brisbane.foe.org.au/climate-frontlines.html

Threatened Species Grant – Nyah-Vinifera Park

Friends of the Earth’s River Country Campaign and local Friends of Nyah-Vinifera Forest group alongside Wadi Wadi Traditional Owners received a Threatened Species Grant from the Victorian Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning in mid-2016.

Volunteers have been out in the Nyah-Vinifera Regional Park getting skilled up and surveying the health of the forest flora. People were trained in plant and weed identification, quadratic surveying and cultural sensitivity in the Park. Being out in the forest, seeing it come back to life with water and learning from Traditional Owners about their land is a massive privilege.

Even the kids have been getting into it, identifying plants and making their own herbariums. This knowledge of our local threatened plant species and bush foods is so important to learn and pass on. Unfortunately, Parks Victoria is severely under-resourced by the Victorian government, so local community groups are taking initiative and doing the work the government should be resourcing.

www.melbourne.foe.org.au/river-country

www.foe.org.au

FoE affiliate Goongerah Environment Centre (GECO) has been campaigning against the logging of the precious tall forests of the Cottonwood range in East Gippsland. This forest was agreed to be set aside by the Andrews’s government Forest Industry Taskforce, who are currently deliberating over the future of Victoria’s forests. The Taskforce is seeking solutions to the issues of logging in contentious areas, conservation of threatened species habitat and the future of the timber industry.

However many areas of habitat that may be needed for future reserves have been destroyed by VicForests since the Taskforce convened. GECO’s citizen surveys have recorded threatened wildlife such as Greater Gliders and Sooty Owls in this beautiful tall forest, but their homes are being destroyed. VicForests and the state government failed to conduct a pre-logging ecological survey and are allowing logging in breach of Victorian law. www.geco.org.au/take_action

GECO holds regular citizen science survey camps in East Gippsland’s threatened forests. The camps are based in Goongerah or the Kuark Forest and collect data on threatened species in areas earmarked for logging. The camps have had lots of recent success in getting areas protected through the surveys. During the September camp, GECO deployed five remote fauna cameras, found a large population of protected Greater Gliders and mapped protected rainforests within VicForests planned logging coupes. Camps are free and all are welcome. You can read about previous camps and sign up for future camps (the next one is in mid-January 2017) at www.geco.org.au

On National Threatened Species Day, September 7, GECO teamed up with other forest survey groups Wildlife of the Central Highlands (WOTCH) and Fauna and Flora Research Collective and attempted to present an invoice to the Victorian Treasurer Tim Pallas for over \$2 million dollars for the work that citizen science groups have carried out conducting pre-logging surveys for protected species in Victoria’s forests. He wasn’t available but Greens member of Parliament Samantha Dunn took the invoice and offered to present it to Parliament on our behalf. Volunteer citizen scientists have literally spent thousands of hours searching for legally protected species in habitat scheduled for logging and have often forced logging to stop in some areas of legally protected habitat. It shouldn’t be up to volunteers and the community to police VicForests and make sure our precious wildlife is given the protection afforded to it under the law! www.geco.org.au/national_threatened_species_day_action

GECO was recently the recipient of the Bob Brown Foundation Community Environment Prize as part of Foundation’s annual Environmentalist of Year awards. GECO campaigner Ed Hill joined other winners at a ceremony in Hobart. Bob Brown said: “Goongerah Environment Centre (GECO) are local environmental heroes. Time after time, the authorities have failed to enforce their own laws designed to protect forests and their wildlife, and this brave band of activists have stepped in to ensure the laws are upheld.” www.bobbrown.org.au

National Threatened Species Day action, September 7, outside the Victorian Parliament House.



Victory!

Victoria's unconventional gas ban

By Chloe Aldenhoven and Cam Walker

On August 30 2016, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews announced that his government would ban all unconventional gas exploration and extraction, and that a moratorium on exploration for onshore conventional gas will remain in place until the year 2020.

The government announced “a permanent ban on the exploration and development of all onshore unconventional gas in Victoria, including hydraulic fracturing (‘fracking’) and coal seam gas.” The legislation to be introduced later this year will also “extend the current moratorium on the exploration and development of conventional onshore gas until 30 June 2020.”

Thus Victoria will become a national leader – the first state to implement a permanent ban on unconventional gas.

It is also one of the most robust policies in the world. Less than 15 international jurisdictions, state or national, have implemented legislation which severely restricts unconventional gas extraction. Even fewer have enacted permanent bans inclusive of all onshore gas exploration and extraction activities.

The Victorian ban is more permanent than Germany's or Scotland's, and more all-encompassing than the bans in New York, Vermont or France.

However this campaign was not only historic and world-leading in its outcomes. It was also historic for its use of grassroots democracy, the coalitions it developed between conservative farming communities, environmentalists and everyone in between, and the sheer scale of the community movement.

Here's a look back at the campaign.

The threat

In 2010, the state Labor government released licenses for the exploration of coal seam gas (CSG), tight and shale gas – all forms of unconventional gas that require techniques such as fracking for extraction.

Licenses covered over a million hectares of western Victoria and about 87% of Gippsland, some of the most important farming land in the state.

But as these licenses were granted, we were beginning to see the devastation unconventional gas mining was causing in other places. Across the United States there were stories of water contamination and health problems in people and livestock.

Here in Australia, communities in the Darling Downs in Queensland were complaining of protracted disputes with mining companies



over land access. Farmers were finding their bores dropping metres due to the ‘dewatering’ of coal seams. Families living near gasfields were beginning to complain of nosebleeds, headaches and neurological problems associated with petrochemical pollution.

Community stirs – moratorium put in place

Friends of the Earth (FoE) began our campaigning on the issue as soon as the licenses were granted, kicking off with a ‘CSG roadshow’ across western Victoria with FoE Campaigns Coordinator Cam Walker and Lock the Gate founder Drew Hutton. The roadshow made contact with communities to let them know about the problems experienced in Queensland, and the emerging resistance in Queensland and NSW.

Even this initial roadshow had an impact. After hearing about the potential environmental and social problems associated with unconventional gas mining, the communities around Deans Marsh and Forest in the Otways stared down coal and

gas exploration company Mantle Mining until they removed CSG from their exploration license.

After the roadshow, FoE began a concerted effort to bring together a coalition of community groups, local councils and individuals to campaign for a moratorium on unconventional gas mining. Both rural and metropolitan councils and community groups across the state put pressure on both Liberal and Labor parliamentarians to put in place a moratorium until the industry could be proven safe.

In August 2012, the then Liberal state government put in place a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, until a national regulatory framework was established, stopping the industry in its tracks.

The blossoming of a social movement

Fresh off a campaign to stop a new coal fired power station being built in Victoria, and a fight against a brown coal mine proposal for Bacchus Marsh, the Quit Coal collective at FoE Melbourne turned its attention to the unconventional gas issue.

Communities in NSW were beginning to use innovative tactics to stop the development of gasfields, especially in the Northern Rivers. The Quit Coal collective got in contact with these communities to start information sharing about their messaging and strategies, and helped link them with Gippsland communities concerned about gas mining licenses. These links to the national movement through the Lock the Gate alliance were vital to the success of the campaign.

Communities in the Northern Rivers had devised the 'Gasfield Free Communities' strategy, a grassroots democratic process that brought the majority of landholders together to refuse access to gas mining companies. Soon a consistent 95% plus of the community were committing to turn away the mining companies. The strategy went viral, and communities across Victoria were declaring themselves "Gasfield Free - protected by community".

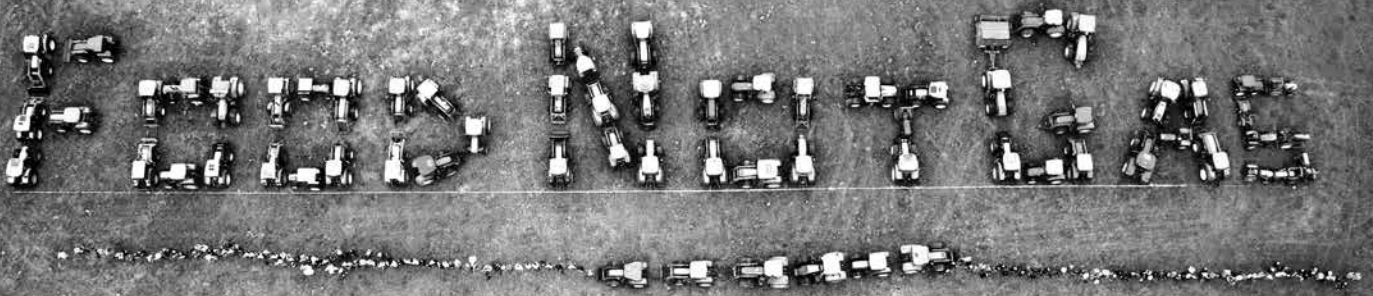
With a state government that was actively promoting the development of new fossil fuel projects, this withdrawal of social licence sent ripples through the political landscape. FoE worked to support and strengthen local groups, and helped co-ordinate two regional groupings that brought all the local initiatives together to discuss strategy and shared action.

From its inception, the campaign was not a simply NIMBY reaction. Solidarity with other regions was at the heart of local action. Groups started to target the state government as this was where a decision to ban fracking would ultimately be made.

Once they had completed their door knocking, local groups held public events to declare themselves gasfield free. For example, the creation of a giant human sign on the 90 Mile Beach stating "no gas fields". They pressured local councillors (10 councils eventually came out and opposed onshore gas), they held protests, shadowed MPs and candidates, and generated several thousand news items in

Soon a consistent 95% plus of the community were committing to turn away the mining companies. The strategy went viral, and communities across Victoria were declaring themselves "Gasfield Free - protected by community".





Tractor action.

regional media. They proposed motions at the conference of the Farmers' Federation (the VFF), which then helped tip the Coalition on the issue.

Again and again, we managed to push out the moratorium deadlines. Every time the government expected a moratorium extension to placate the community, rather than dying away, the movement grew. The pressure mounted.

The big win

After five years of campaigning and over six months of post-parliamentary inquiry deliberation, the Premier Daniel Andrews announced a permanent ban on all unconventional gas exploration and development, and an extension to the moratorium on conventional onshore gas drilling until 2020.

As the Premier said when meeting farmers to celebrate the decision, the decision was the result of a very well run community campaign. Huge relief has swept over the community, and the party continues. We look forward to the legislation going through parliament in December 2016, with the support of the Greens, the Sex Party, the Shooters and Fishers party and Vote 1 Local Jobs. The Coalition is yet to commit to supporting the legislation.

Getting back to values – community, land, water, future generations

One of the characteristics of this campaign was the levels of consensus it developed in the community, particularly the communities directly affected.

The gasfield free organising model, based on bringing small rural and regional centres together in opposition to a threat, also inherently builds a sense of cohesion and connection in communities. This is because diverse members of the community need to find common cause and identify viable ways for them to work together. It helps people to articulate their vision for their preferred option for their community, and builds their agency to work towards that outcome. It weaves together a range of concerns,

including public health, the environment, the value of activities like farming and tourism, sense of place and appreciation of community, as well as concerns for groundwater and climate change. By virtue of the fact that multiple strands of interest and concern are involved, this allows strong bonds and friendships to be built as there are multiple points of commonality.

The campaign has fostered a new generation of environmental justice campaigners across Victoria, and a network of communities brought together on the values of community, land, water and protecting what we have for future generations.

Environmental justice

Rural communities are suffering pressures from all sides. Price squeezes from the supermarkets, the vagaries of food production in a globalised world, with a corresponding race to the bottom in terms of pricing, and cutbacks in services and government support. Factor in the impacts of climate change and you have communities who are being squeezed to the margins.

Leaving aside the development of the Landcare movement, farmers have not been the natural allies of the generally left-of-centre, urban focused environment movement. In this sense the new 'site resistance' movements against new coal and gas are welcome and heartening on many levels. For Victorian campaigners, now that we have a permanent ban, the next – and possibly most difficult stage – in the campaign will be to forge new campaigns on new issues with the thousands of people who were mobilised through the coal and gas campaigns.

On the other hand, here in Victoria, many relationships were not progressed or deepened through this campaign. Engagement with traditional owner groups was, at best, light. Some unions, notably the AWU entered the fray late in the campaign, arguing against the ban. Yet the Victorian Trades Hall supported the moratorium.

In February 2016, FoE organised a 'grow renewables, ban gas' rally outside parliament on the first sitting day. This was a conscious attempt

After five years of campaigning and over six months of post-parliamentary inquiry deliberation, the Premier Daniel Andrews announced a permanent ban on all unconventional gas exploration and development, and an extension to the moratorium on conventional onshore gas drilling until 2020.

to bring together both ends of our campaign – the Yes 2 Renewables project and the Coal and Gas Free Victoria umbrella. The speakers at this event included Wendy Farmer of Voices of the Valley (representing front line communities in the Latrobe Valley), the Labor Environment Action Network (LEAN), the shadow minister for renewables (a Liberal MP), the secretary of the Trades and Labor Council, two Greens MPs, a sheep farmer and a worker from the wind sector.

This demonstrates what is possible through new forms of campaigning. There are clear parallels to the ‘Green bans’ campaigns of the early 1970s or the alliance-focused campaign to stop the Jabiluka uranium mine. But engaging with generally conservative rural communities is a significant move for the environment movement.

Congratulations to all who have been part of this campaign, to all who signed petitions, wrote letters to their politicians and papers, signed petitions, held stalls, donated, organised their communities and held events. Some state and national groups played a key role in the campaign, including Lock the Gate, Doctors for Environment Australia, and Environmental Justice Australia. Together we created history, and protected millions of hectares of Victoria for current and future generations!

<http://quitcoal.org.au/>

<http://coalandgasfreevic.org/>

http://www.melbourne.foe.org.au/gas_frack_ban

#VicGasBan



‘Astonishingly successful’

“For five years, farmers and activists with Lock the Gate and Friends of the Earth have run a grassroots campaign (the industry would argue a scare campaign) highlighting risks associated with fracking. It’s been astonishingly successful – a state parliamentary inquiry into the issue received more submissions than any in recent memory, almost all against.”

The Age, 30 August 2016



A victory for rural Victorians

Catherine Hearse

Victorian rural communities worked hard for a gas ban and achieved it this August. For five years they surveyed, congregated, organised, consulted, wrote, rang, tweeted, and developed increasingly creative actions. Rural Victorians have demonstrated the formidable staying power that keeps generations of farmers on the land. They have made films, weathered consultations and inquiries and provided multitudes of submissions through changes of government and ministers. They've produced memorable visual actions and rapid, witty responses to criticism from industry, and developed powerful memes that overtook the twittersphere and social media.

The level of rural political engagement was constant and informative. It was also colourful and entertaining. The first aerial sign in Poowong spelled out "We R CSG Free" in colourful clothing and yellow Lock the Gate triangles. Poowong was celebrating its gasfield free declaration, the first of many to come across Gippsland and Western Victoria. Seventy-four more community declarations followed. Each had its own signature celebration and many more colourful aerial signs were created.

Rural people also travelled hours to take part in city events, to declare Victoria gasfield free, knit with Knitting Nannas against Gas who chatted with Daniel Andrews, present scrolls and muster votes on the steps of parliament. They created inventive signs and spoke with eloquence and passion, and then they travelled the miles back to farms and communities.

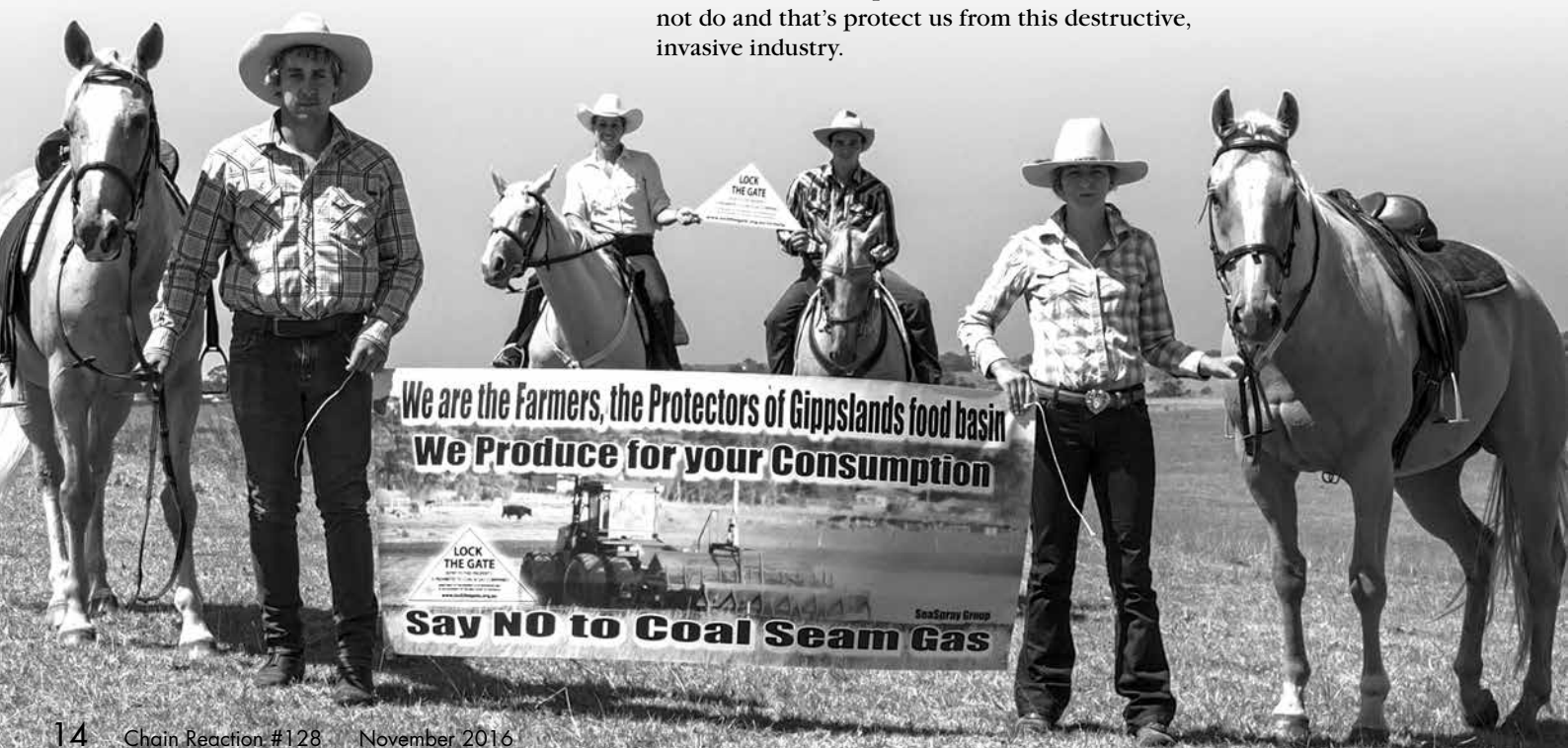
The Victorian Gas Ban is a wonderful achievement for communities, an extraordinary demonstration of commitment to community

organising in the face of constant pressure from fossil fuel interests. The lobbyists' self-interested insistence on pushing unfounded gas shortage and price rise scares was effectively negated with sound research, intelligence and wit.

FoE Melbourne and Quit Coal – especially Chloe Aldenhoven, Ursula Alquier, Alison Marchant and Cam Walker – have played huge roles in supporting and organising with communities as well as holding up the city end of the campaign. There are many other individuals and organisations whose expertise has been critical to the process.

But when we look at why and how this campaign worked we come back to the communities whose farmland and towns were under licence. Their courage in embracing new processes, speaking to ministers and premiers and countering the fossil fuel lobby was formidable. Their insistence clearly demonstrated that there is no social licence for onshore gas in Victoria. They may be tired and eager to get back to their farms and communities but there's no doubt the celebrations will continue for months.

Seaspray dairy farmer Julie Boulton said: "This decision is such a relief for our community and so many like it. The threat of unconventional onshore gas mining has been hanging over our heads for years. It has been so heart wrenching at times, when we thought the drill rigs were coming and there was nothing we could do but we pulled together as a community and decided to fight this threat to our farmland, water and health and today's decision is just fantastic, we are ecstatic. I'd like to thank Premier Daniel Andrews for standing beside rural communities and doing what the previous governments would not do and that's protect us from this destructive, invasive industry."



Six things that won the #VicGasBan

Nicola Paris – coordinator of FoE affiliate Counteract

August 30 – Today it was announced by the Andrews Labor government that a permanent ban on unconventional gas is to be legislated in Victoria. It is a huge and significant announcement that will hopefully set an exciting precedent across the country. It was an amazing grassroots campaign that led to this victory. We were only involved in a small part of this campaign, and want to ensure that the big congratulations go to the Quit Coal collective (www.quitcoal.org.au) and their Coal and Gasfield Free campaign (www.coalandgasfreevic.org) with Friends of the Earth Australia, who worked collaboratively with Lock the Gate to pull off this extraordinary win, on the smell of an oily rag.

Counteract's involvement was during the phase of the campaign when it seemed like drilling for gas by Lakes Oil was imminent. We had the pleasure of heading out to the regions for a series of workshops and to support the community to prepare for nonviolent direct action, should the need come to defend the farmland and water from fracking. We also spent a lot of time collaborating with Environmental Justice Australia on a resource for the communities so they could understand their legal rights.

But the main work was on the ground – face to face, relentless community organising over five years. 75 communities across Gippsland and western Victoria went through an intensive process of face to face surveys, media and public events, culminating in unstoppable community momentum.

We wanted to share a few aspects of the campaign we reckon made the win:

- 1. Young women leaders:** Along with the support of the Melbourne campaign office, including experienced organisers the on ground organising was driven by inspiring young women – Ursula, Chloe and more recently Alison, were paid very little for a hugely high impact campaign. Women were also the back bone of much of the regional organising – building groups, stepping up as spokespeople, and just generally getting things done!
- 2. Non-linear, de-centralised organising:** Understanding that social movements develop their own weather and often people on the ground know best is vital. It's useful to be reactive sometimes, but also to prepare a strong groundwork, lay out some basic frameworks but then let communities run with their own ideas. The popular model of the traditional linear campaign path and centralised control of larger non-government organisations does not necessarily serve us well in this regard.

- 3. Not needing to brand everything:** Many environment organisations feel the need to justify their expenditure by “branding” events. This is one of the best aspects of Friends of the Earth. They do not. Organisers were very happy to do the support work without putting their logos on community events. Local spokespeople were encouraged to speak up rather than import city activists.
- 4. Being brave:** It can be a big thing for a city activist to walk into a meeting of farmers and be concerned about not getting people off side. There is an understandable cynicism about “city slickers” campaigning from their city offices and not understanding work on the ground. It's also a scary thing for people who have never had parking tickets to think about participating in civil disobedience. Or face a media scrum. A bit of bravery is catching. There was a fair bit going around.
- 5. Investing in people:** Whether it was training people in nonviolent direct action, media spokesing, community organising, how to do the gasfield free survey or social media – there were 100's of people skilled up across the regions – city organisers conducted heaps of workshops, many of them voluntarily to share skills with regional organisers.
- 6. Creativity:** The boundless creativity of regional communities was seen in an epic series of visual events – giving the media amazing vibrant images to talk about their campaign. From amazing community parades, to huge signs made from utes or sheep, these guys knew how to rock a photo op!

Whilst there was some great and useful work from other environment organisations and political parties it would have amounted to nothing without the on-ground community campaign led by the local communities and supported by Friends of the Earth.

If you were involved in this campaign in any way, we salute you! We look forward to seeing the ongoing “democratising” of these 75+ regional communities who declared themselves Gasfield Free. Now they have worked together to win this campaign, they have a sense of participating in politics on their terms – not just every three or four years. That is a dangerous and beautiful thing!

75 communities across Gippsland and western Victoria went through an intensive process of face to face surveys, media and public events, culminating in unstoppable community momentum.

Victorian Farmers Federation meetings “more like a meeting of the Greens”

Abridged from The Weekly Times

“We were in no doubt about what the right decision to make was and we were strongly encouraged by a very, very well-organised campaign. The credit is not for us, the credit goes to all those who fought so hard for this outcome.”
– Premier Daniel Andrews discussing Victoria’s fracking ban at Moriac.

Victoria will become the first state in Australia to legislate a permanent ban against fracking. When the policy, including a ban on all unconventional onshore gas exploration and extraction is written into law later this year, it will be in part because of two self-described “runaway ratbags”.

Ursula Alquier and Chloe Aldenhoven have driven the anti-gas movement in Victoria, delivering a result few would have thought realistic just four years ago. That’s when Ms Aldenhoven, 27, was first employed as a Lock the Gate co-ordinator, after Friends of the Earth won a philanthropic grant “to stop unconventional gas and the expansion of coal in Victoria”.

“Instead of buying a camera and a database and various resources for the campaign, they put the money aside to pay me one day a week,” Ms Aldenhoven said.

As industry worked to lobby at the top end of town, Lock the Gate was knocking on doors in far-flung places. “We estimate we have knocked on about 30,000 doors through the survey process ... it’s a phenomenal scale of the network that this movement has created,” Ms Aldenhoven said.

While the debate saw unions line up with big business to support onshore conventional gas, perhaps one of the more unusual allegiances to come out of the debate has been that between Lock the Gate and the state’s farmers.

“The Victorian Farmers Federation didn’t really want anything to do with us in the beginning and put a lot of energy into distancing themselves from the Lock the Gate movement – they were not the only ones – but I think they rapidly began to understand this wasn’t rabid greenies and it wasn’t a group of radicals. It was really the overwhelming majority of communities reflecting the sentiment and becoming a part of the social movement,” Ms Aldenhoven said.

Clearly not all Victorian Farmers Federation members were on board and one Gippsland farmer told *The Weekly Times* he was concerned his local branch meetings had become “more like a meeting of the Greens”.

Last June, the Farmers Federation endorsed a policy, raised by a group of farmers from southwest Victoria, calling for the onshore gas moratorium to extend until the middle of 2020. By September, pushed along by two regional by-elections, the Victorian Coalition Opposition had adopted the same policy. It has not yet said if it would support the Government’s legislation, instead waiting to see the fine print.

But on the day Mr Andrews announced the permanent ban, Opposition Leader Matthew Guy almost claimed it was his idea. “There have been moratoriums on fracking (before) – the Opposition proposed one in September last year, this is nothing new,” Mr Guy said.

Kath Sullivan, 16 Sept 2016, ‘Victoria to be nation leader in fracking ban’, www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/news/politics/victoria-to-be-nation-leader-in-fracking-ban/news-story/ec62ce8fa4fd25640896f1b38a74591d



Fuelling the fire: New coal technologies like UCG spell disaster for climate

Cam Walker

Given UCG's disastrous history including Linc Energy's irreversible environmental damage in Queensland, Friends of the Earth is calling for a moratorium on all UCG projects in Australia.

In recent years Australia, like many countries around the planet, has seen a major expansion in the development of unconventional oil and gas drilling. These are oil and gas resources which cannot be produced by conventional processes (that is, through using the natural pressure of the wells to release the resource trapped in a coal or rock seam).

Until the 1990s, production of conventional oil and gas kept prices relatively stable, so there was limited incentive to develop technologies to explore and produce unconventional oil and gas resources. In the 2000s, prices started to increase, and with known reserves starting to peak, it was clear that this trend would continue into the future.

As debate increasingly focused on energy independence, a number of countries who consume large volumes of fossil energy such as the USA, Canada and China started to realise they had potentially enormous volumes of unconventional oil and gas. This in turn led to a major development effort that saw a huge expansion in the use of hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') to access methane in shale beds to produce gas in the USA and elsewhere.

Australia also has major reserves of oil and gas which could potentially yield through the use of unconventional drilling methods. Here the unconventional gas resource includes coal seam gas (CSG), shale gas and tight gas. Exploration for CSG in Australia began in 1976 in Queensland's Bowen Basin. The industry took hold, initially in Queensland, where there are currently around 4,000 onshore gas rigs. More than 37% of the Australian landmass is currently under exploration permit or application for coal or gas.

The UCG industry has been strongly resisted by regional communities and environmental groups around the country and the many dangers of fracking are well documented (www.lockthegate.org.au). This has resulted in moratoriums on fracking in states such as Victoria (and of course the Victorian ban on unconventional gas mining announced in August).

The transition away from fossil fuels to renewable technology is well underway. According to the UNEP's 10th 'Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2016' report, all investments in renewables totalled US\$286 billion in 2015, some 3% higher than the previous record in 2011. Coal and gas-fired electricity generation drew less than half this record investment made in solar, wind and other renewables capacity. But as we enter the final stage in humanity's long reliance on fossil fuels, a new threat is emerging.

After the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in Canberra in August, gas is back on Australia's agenda in a big way. The meeting of state and federal energy ministers in particular saw an extraordinary focus on gas in the electricity sector, with the new Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg calling for more gas production and an end to the state-based moratoriums.

Underground Coal Gasification

However, there is another side to the gas debate, one that has received much less coverage, but which is slowly being pursued in a number of areas around the country. Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) and Coal Chemical technologies threaten to destabilise the earth's climate and irreversibly damage local environments.

These new approaches, which seek to massively expand the volume of coal reserves which can be used, are dangerous 'Frankenstein' technologies. UCG is an unconventional coal technology where coal seams are burnt under the ground to produce a type of synthesis gas (syn gas) for energy and industrial use. The Coal Chemical industry includes a suite of processes where coal is turned into oil, gas and chemical products for commercial and domestic use.

While UCG has been held out as a dream technology by its proponents since it was proposed in the 1930s, it has gone almost nowhere. Previous UCG test operations have left a legacy of contamination in the USA. There is only one commercial UCG operation in the world at present, in Uzbekistan. This plant feeds syn gas to a small power plant. However, there is interest in and development of UCG in Australia, Europe, Russia, Canada, the U.S., China and India at present. Like carbon capture and storage, UCG and coal chemical technologies have absorbed vast amounts of research and development money for very little tangible outcome.

While there is no commercial production of UCG in Australia, there have previously been test operations in Queensland, and two are currently underway in South Australia. A UCG trial conducted by Linc Energy in Australia from 1999-2013 ended in a major contamination incident with "irreversible damage" to the environment. The company is being prosecuted for five counts of "willfully and unlawfully causing serious environmental harm" between July 2007 and December 2013. Linc Energy went into voluntary administration in April 2016, and in May 2016 it was announced that the company is going into liquidation.

Climate science makes it clear that the time for new development of fossil fuels is long over. To have a chance to stay below 1.5C of overall warming will mean we need to keep almost all currently accessible coal in the ground. Yet some in industry continue to peddle the illusion that UCG will offer new investment and employment in communities which are currently reliant on traditional coal production for domestic use or export and 'lower emissions' options for producing energy. If successful, UCG could allow new sources of coal to be exploited.

Friends of the Earth
invites you to join the

active friends program

Following the Linc disaster, the industry was banned in Queensland. It is currently under moratorium in Scotland and Wales.

New report: 'Fuelling the Fire'

Friends of the Earth has recently released a report called 'Fuelling the Fire: the chequered history of Underground Coal Gasification and Coal Chemicals around the world'.

The report draws together evidence of UCG test projects over the last three decades and highlights how destructive UCG and Coal Chemicals are:

- Globally, UCG could dramatically fuel climate change by potentially creating an extra 1,650 billion tonnes of CO₂ – four times the total amount that can be emitted if the world is to avoid catastrophic climate change.
- Irreversible environmental damage has been done by Linc Energy's recent UCG experiment in Queensland, Australia, prompting the Queensland government to ban the technology.
- The US has been the testing ground for several UCG experiments that have resulted in long-term contamination of groundwater.
- Coal-to-Chemicals, the process of converting coal into different gases, liquid fuels and chemical products, have devastating impacts on local environments in South Africa and China with their massive water, coal and energy consumption.
- Sasol's Coal Chemical plants in South Africa every year produces 35 million cubic metres of liquid effluent laden with metals and salts which creates toxic waste dumps, pits and ponds.

The report includes case studies from Australia, China, South Africa, the UK and the US.

On releasing the report, Friends of the Earth International is calling for:

- No new public money into Research and Development of UCG and Coal Chemicals
- An end to public subsidies for existing UCG and Coal Chemicals
- A ban on new UCG and Coal Chemicals development
- A rapid phase out of existing UCG and Coal Chemicals industries

Cam Walker is campaigns co-ordinator with Friends of the Earth, Melbourne.

The 'Fuelling the Fire' report is posted at: www.foei.org/resources/publications/unconventional-coal

What is the Active Friends Program?

The Active Friends Program is one of the best means to support current and future work of Friends of the Earth. It involves a regular monthly donation of a self-nominated amount.

Where will Active Friends donations go?

Friends of the Earth is renowned for making a little money go a long way. Because our administration costs are always kept to a bare minimum, practically all Active Friends contributions directly support campaign work, publications and community engagement. Active Friends donations support

- a moratorium on coal and coal seam gas mining through our 'Quit Coal' campaign

- renewable energy through our 'yes2renewables' campaign

- our work to safeguard water for the rivers, wetlands and forests of over 14% of Australia's landscapes through the 'ourdarlingmurray.org' campaign

- FoE's Anti Nuclear & Clean Energy (ACE) campaign, which continues to highlight the dangers of nuclear power and uranium mining and to promote safe alternatives.

Why is the Active Friends Program vital to FoE?

To remain a radical and credible voice for social and environmental justice, we need a stable financial base.

How can you join the Active Friends Program?

To join the Active Friends program, please see the 'Support Friends of the Earth' page in this edition of Chain Reaction, or go to www.foe.org.au and click on the donate button.. All Active Friends donations are fully tax deductible.

Who will pay for the damage of the new mega-mines?

John Glue

The Queensland and NSW governments are rushing to approve the biggest coal mines Australia has ever seen, such as the Adani and Alpha Mines in central Queensland. The Queensland government recently invoked special powers to ensure the controversial Carmichael coal and rail project starts next year and to cut red tape for the \$21.7 billion Adani venture.

Unfortunately, we suspect this will mean most of the clean-up and rehabilitation costs will be left to the public purse as usual. This is because most mines would not be economically viable if they have to pay the full cost of damage they cause. These new mega-mines need tougher damage and rehabilitation regulation to ensure the Australian public isn't left to pay to fix the problems they cause.

When mining companies are granted permission to mine, they are also supposed to repair the damage from mining. However, away from public scrutiny the regulators allow the industry to get away with second-rate mine rehabilitation which permanently scars our landscape. There are now some 50,000 abandoned mines across the country where the companies have simply walked away and left the sites un-rehabilitated.

A leaked Queensland government report reveals that out of 190,000 hectares of land disturbed by coal mining in the state, only 22% has been subject to any form of preliminary rehabilitation.¹ This means currently Queensland taxpayers are set to foot a massive bill of \$3.2 billion for their rehabilitation alone. "This is just the tip of the iceberg," said Rick Humphries from the Lock the Gate Alliance. "The report didn't cover other commodities like copper, lead or zinc. That'll be billions more."¹

Friends of the Earth Far-North Queensland supports the Lock the Gate campaign to hold the industry accountable to fix up its messes. We think current and future mines should be rehabilitated to world's best practice standards and we want an effective programme to deal with abandoned mines.

It is clear the environmental movement is going to have to redouble our efforts to better regulate, or even stop, these new mines. There was only one vote, out of 88, against the Adani mine proceeding when the vote was taken in the Queensland Parliament at the end of August.

Independent MP Rob Pyne told *Green Left Weekly*: "I called a division because I know for a fact there are some people in the ALP who don't support [the Adani mine]. I was hoping

some of them might do the right thing by their children and future generations and at the very least abstain. Cairns is a Pacific rim city and I'm worried that my electorate will be under water if they keep going ahead with these 20th century proposals. Many countries are transitioning away from fossil fuels. We have to transition away from fossil fuels as well. All they talk about in this place [Parliament] is jobs; but they're looking for jobs in all the wrong places."²

Also of concern is the impact of the mining giants on global warming. A new report, 'Explaining Ocean Warming', by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) finds that warming is making the oceans sicker than ever, spreading disease among animals and humans and threatening food security across the planet.

"We all know that the oceans sustain the planet. We all know that the oceans provide every second breath we take," IUCN director-general Inger Anderson said. "And yet we are making oceans sick."³

The study includes evidence that ocean warming is causing increased disease in plant and animal populations. One of the lead authors, Dan Laffolley, said "Pathogens such as cholera-bearing bacteria and toxic algal blooms that can cause neurological illness such as ciguatera poison, spread more easily in warm water, with direct impact on human health."

John Glue is a member of Friends of the Earth, Far-North Queensland.

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The Queensland and NSW governments are rushing to approve the biggest coal mines Australia has ever seen

Clermont coal mine,
central Queensland.



Fossil fuel divestment and the tertiary education sector

Jack Bertolus

The fossil fuel divestment movement is big and growing. So far, 612 institutions and more than 50,000 individuals worth US\$3.4 trillion have made some sort of commitment to divest.¹ Having spread from university campuses in the US to Australian institutions like the Australian National University, the National Tertiary Education Union and most recently the Queensland University of Technology (QUT)², this movement is intrinsically linked with the tertiary education sector.

With climate change already putting life, communities and culture at risk, to say nothing of the frightening future scenarios we're presented with, the desperate environmental and social imperative to shift finance away from fossil fuels is clearly not lost on Australian academics. On top of this, financial experts' repeated warnings of an impending carbon bubble are adding weight to calls for fossil fuel divestment purely on financial grounds.³

It is somewhat surprising then that the tertiary education sector's superannuation fund, UniSuper, continues to invest members' money in fossil fuels by default. Australian academics, including those researching climate change and its consequences are investing in its causes via their super fund. Can you imagine spending your professional life working to understand and address an existential threat to humanity, only to have your retirement savings invested in its primary causes?

UniSuper is Australia's seventh largest superannuation fund, managing approximately \$55 billion for more than 400,000 members.⁴ Super Switch, a website tracking Australian super funds' exposure to fossil fuels, estimates at least 7.5 per cent of the value of shareholdings within the default investment ('Balanced') option is invested in fossil fuel companies.⁵ Given the majority of the option's holdings are undisclosed, this percentage could be significantly higher.

According to Super Switch, UniSuper's holdings include companies with significant coal mining operations such as BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and Wesfarmers. The fund has also previously

disclosed holdings in major fossil fuel companies AGL, Caltex, Origin, Santos and South32.

Most, if not all of these companies are excluded from UniSuper's 'Sustainable' options, meaning a small number of highly engaged, financially confident members can limit their exposure to fossil fuels and climate risk. Approximately 7% of non-defined benefit funds are invested in Sustainable options, yet a lack of widespread uptake doesn't suggest members oppose divestment. The Australian reported UniSuper CEO Kevin O'Sullivan as having said, "a great deal of people across many super funds were generally apathetic about investments" and that "a lot of people leave their money with the fund chosen by their employer, and once they are in, three-quarters of people just choose the default investment option anyway."⁶

Among other reasons, members also stick to defaults due to a lack of financial literacy or confidence and a natural aversion to straying from the status quo.⁷ Indeed, failing to switch to 'sustainable' options says more about these factors than members' appetite for fossil fuel divestment.

In fact, UniSuper agrees members "take a keen interest in ESG [environmental, social and corporate governance] and sustainability related investment issues".⁸ Despite this, O'Sullivan maintains, "it's up to the fund's trustee, management, and advisers to consider and decide [what's best for members] without acquiescing to extreme pressure and campaigning from non-members or from a vocal minority of members."⁹

This position is particularly interesting when viewed in light of the snap board meeting and resulting promise from O'Sullivan and Chairman Chris Cuffe to remain silent on the proposed royal commission into the banking sector. This occurred in April after an NTEU campaign prompted 2,600 members to contact the fund, calling for O'Sullivan to retract his public opposition to the proposed commission.¹⁰

In that case it seems a 'vocal minority' and 'campaigning' were clearly enough to influence the fund's management. Perhaps the board recognised

So far, 612 institutions and more than 50,000 individuals worth US\$3.4 trillion have made some sort of commitment to divest.



the reaction represented a broader opinion?

They can rest assured that the broad opinion of their members is that divesting from fossil fuels is important. A Lonergan Research poll conducted in May 2014 indicated 67 per cent of Australians would choose a bank or super fund which does not invest in fossil fuels over one that does.¹¹ An August 2016 survey prepared by Essential Research and commissioned by Market Forces, showed 64 per cent of Australians agree that their super fund should be proactively reducing exposure to fossil fuel investments.¹²

But the idea that vocal minorities can't have their concerns acted upon is plainly absurd. Given UniSuper's 400,000 members, can the fund

dismiss any group below 200,000 expressing an opinion as a minority? The NTEU campaign suggests otherwise. So how many divestment advocates need to speak up before their concerns are given legitimate consideration?

With a membership so well informed and deeply connected to the devastating risks climate change poses to our environment, communities and economy, UniSuper should arguably be leading the industry on fossil fuel divestment.

But it seems the call for action must reach a deafening pitch before significant steps will be taken – depending on what the issue is, right UniSuper?

Jack Bertolus is Research Coordinator at the FoE-affiliate Market Forces.

Source: Flickr, Joe Brusky

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The Future of Latrobe Valley: Community Leadership on Just Transition

Kate Wattachow

It was February 9, 2014, in the middle of long summer that just kept getting longer, and in the Latrobe Valley a coal mine was burning.

The Valley is situated east of Melbourne along the Princes Freeway, bordered by the Strzelecki Ranges to the south and distant blue mountains to the north. The region is in Gunaikurnai country, and with an amalgamation of towns, farmland, cities and state forests it forms a hotspot for the manufacturing and agriculture industries.

It is also the primary producer of Victoria's electricity, generating 85% of the State's power from four big coal-fired power stations – Yallourn, Hazelwood and Loy Yang A & B. These stations sit beside their associated mines, which dig into the large deposits of brown coal that sit beneath the surface of the Valley, and neighbour Latrobe Valley's towns; Yallourn North, Moe, Morwell and Traralgon.

Initially the mines and power stations were owned by the state government and were a source of jobs and wealth for the communities in the Valley. However in the late 1980s and '90s they were privatised, with Hazelwood falling under the ownership of British-owned International Power. Privatisation directly and indirectly resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, gutting the local economy.

Furthermore, when the mines and power stations were sold to private companies, the companies began to deliberately downscale safety and maintenance standards. In 2010 Hazelwood was taken over by French multinational corporation GDF Suez, which has since rebranded itself as Engie. Safety standards had been degrading in the years beforehand and in GDF Suez's hands continued to do so.

After all, it was cheaper not to cover old coal faces in clay, and leave them exposed to potential embers.

Cheaper not to upgrade old sprinkler systems, and sell the metal for scrap. Cheaper to employ less people, and have fewer on duty available to fight the fires that would always crop up.

Cheaper to cross one's fingers, and pray nothing goes wrong.

Fire

In coal mines, fires are impossible to avoid and complicated to fight. With precautions and safety measures being left by the wayside, a small fire getting out of control and turning into a full scale disaster was only a matter of time.

When the Hazelwood mine caught fire in 2014, it did so less than one kilometre from Morwell. And when the acrid smoke and heavy ash billowed up from the whole coal face and started to fall down, it did so right onto the people of Morwell.

Streets and gardens blanketed with smoke, ash clogging gutters and lungs. A whole mountainside of coal on fire. It looked like a war zone, or the scene from a dystopian movie, and it happened less than a two-hour drive from the Victorian Parliament.

The toxic fire burnt for 45 days and is one of the worst industrial disasters in Victoria's history. It was the result of industry negligence, then exacerbated by the Naphthine state government providing inadequate health advice and half-hearted evacuation assistance. A government fiddling while Morwell was burning.

However, the Latrobe Valley community was not about to tolerate the government abandoning them. They weren't going to let the government ignore the disaster, or put its hands over its ears and pretend it wasn't happening.

The community rallied.

On the 2nd of March, 2014, holding banners and wearing breathing masks, residents from the area marched through Morwell. They marched to call for an end to the toxic fire, for emergency health support for the stricken region, and, most critically of all, for air that they could breathe without it killing them.

Voices of the Valley

As the disaster unfolded a group emerged who would become Voices of the Valley. Their mission statement is to speak for those in the Valley who cannot speak for themselves. During the fire they fought for emergency health support and industrial and governmental accountability. Once the mine was out they kept fighting, because though the fire had ended the Valley was still suffering the aftermath.

Voices of the Valley were one of the key advocates for an independent inquiry into the Hazelwood mine fire, and when the first inquiry failed to investigate deaths they campaigned for a second inquiry. They were determined to get the truth, and for the Valley to get justice.

The combined efforts of Voices of the Valley, the Latrobe Valley community, and support from outside the region were successful. A second inquiry was called and soon after confirmed that the community was right: there had been an increase of deaths during the fire and all of the evidence pointed to the acrid smoke as the cause. The inquiry made recommendations to the government and industry in regards to working with the beleaguered community to rectify what was wrong, and to ensure that a disaster like this never happened again.

But looking ahead, to the future of the region, Voices of the Valley knew that still more needed to be done. The truth has long been that the closure of the mines and power stations is inevitable. When Hazelwood was first built, it was intended to be closed down by 2005. Coal, particularly brown coal, is becoming less and less able to compete with renewable technologies both Australia-wide and internationally, and with the threat of catastrophic climate change the need to globally reduce CO2 emissions is gaining political momentum.

Coal's days are limited, and it is not something that the future of a sustainable or prosperous local economy can be built on.

Jobs and Hope: A Transition Plan

The Hazelwood mine fire was a catalyst in Voices of the Valley's minds; this wasn't just about the fire anymore. This was about what the local economy needed to thrive after an industrial disaster, after privatisation, after coal. This was, as President of Voices of the Valley Wendy Farmer says, about jobs and hope. Two things the Valley had been in want of for a long while. Aware from their experience of the mine fire that the community had to be at the helm, driving change, Voices of the Valley began working on an ambitious transition plan.



The Voices of the Valley transition plan is designed to diversify the economy. A key part of this process will be transitioning energy production in the Valley. Australia is already transforming from point-source electricity production to distributed electricity production, where instead of a single power station lighting up many towns, towns of solar-panelled buildings become miniature power stations lighting up everything. With the pre-existing powerlines all leading to Latrobe Valley, it is in the perfect position for energy production, storage, and distribution. In this way, the evolving energy grid presents a golden opportunity.

Voices of the Valley proposes a Transition Centre to seize this opportunity. It will be a hub for innovation and support for new industries. The Transition Centre would include research, pathways for transitioning workers, and education – especially for the skills related to producing and maintaining a renewable and diversified grid. It will provide a springboard for capitalising on opportunities in mine rehabilitation, recycling of the old power stations, Gippsland rail upgrades and industrial tourism. Another key aspect of the Transition Centre is supporting new business models such as community-owned cooperatives.

Cooperatives are a long-standing but resurging breed of collectively-owned businesses where the wealth of the business is distributed amongst the workers, members and, by extension, the surrounding community. This is in contrast to the typical capitalist model of private ownership, which results in the concentration of wealth and power into the hands of a small minority. In the Valley, with the foreign ownership of the mines and power stations, this has seen much of the financial benefits of energy production disappear overseas.

Walk With The Valley

Excitingly, cooperatives are already finding their foothold in the region. Earthworker is a community-based cooperative that is setting up a worker-owned solar hot water factory in Morwell. In September they held the 'Walk With The Valley' – Earthworker members and supporters travelled by foot from Pakenham to Morwell. This act of solidarity was done to raise awareness and support for a Just Transition in the Valley, as well as generate funds to get their factory up and running and providing dignified green jobs in renewable energy manufacturing.

In these ways the Transition Centre fills the gap between the Valley's current economy and energy system, which is based largely on a few

foreign-owned power companies, and the economy and energy system of the future, where the community owns the jobs and energy. This gap also exists at a national level, meaning that Latrobe Valley can be a leader for other communities who right now are staring down the barrel of uncertain futures.

At present, Voices of the Valley has begun taking the Transition Plan to other groups and communities located in Latrobe Valley. As the Plan is for the whole community an integral part of its implementation will be community consultation and engagement.

With the recent announcement that Engie's Hazelwood power plant could close as soon as 2017, Voices of the Valley are calling for state and federal support in the region. The community is leading the way, and now the local, state and federal governments need to step up.

All levels of government can directly support the groups working on transition, as well as put in place structures and policies that enable a just economic transition. Examples of these include developing a formal transition board or body for Latrobe Valley, policies that drive local investment, and working with the community to develop a comprehensive roadmap to transition.

It is important the transition is led by the community because that is the only way the process can be truly just. The Latrobe Valley has experienced too much hardship and loss in the past from circumstances outside of people's control. Now Voices of the Valley has a vision for the future and a plan on how to get there, so it is time for all of us to help make it happen.

If you want to help make a Just Transition possible in the Latrobe Valley, there are a range of actions you can take:

- Follow Friends of the Earth's involvement with transition in Latrobe Valley at www.melbourne.foe.org.au/lv_transition
- Donate to Voices of the Valley.
- Donate to Earthworker to help them get their factory in Morwell up and running.
- Make a submission to Friends of the Earth's 'Climate Budget' campaign on ways the state government can invest in and assist transition for Latrobe Valley in the 2017 State budget. www.melbourne.foe.org.au/climate_budget
- Via email or social media, call on state and federal MP's to work with the LatrobeValley community to implement a transition strategy.
- Call on Engie to work with the community to transition mine workers and create jobs through mine rehabilitation.
- Comment on news articles about Hazelwood and Latrobe Valley, and raise the issue of a Just Transition. When doing so you can tag relevant MPs, or use the #LVTransition or #StandWithTheValley hashtags.

Kate Wattchow is the Latrobe Valley Community Campaigner with Friends of the Earth.

Stopping the boats in the time of climate change

John Langer

In the churn of public political consciousness, the Turnbull government's May 2016 budget is ancient history. So here's a reminder: climate change didn't get a mention, not even a passing glance.

Since then we've seen One Nation's Malcolm Roberts, a former coal mine manager and climate change denier, elected to the Senate; new Minister of Environment and Energy, Josh Frydenberg, still spruiking the necessity of coal; and another denier, Liberal MP Craig Kelly, coordinating backbench feedback to the government on climate and energy policy.

Then there's been further revelations about the massive coral bleach of the Great Barrier Reef, a report that 2016 has been the hottest year on record, a court appeal knock-back allowing Adani to proceed with Carmichael mine construction, half the budget cut from of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, recommendations from the Climate Change Authority that pull away from genuine engagement with a low carbon economy international obligations. And if this doesn't make a dismal enough list (so much more that could be added), there's Tony Abbott speechifying on the sidelines about 'green sabotage and law-fare' stopping Australia from digging for even more coal. And Malcolm Turnbull, sounding like Tony Abbott - blaming the South Australian blackout on the state's use of renewable energy.

Meanwhile, as Australia fiddles and the planet burns, other key institutional policy-makers are in the process of confronting climate change, with a surprising degree of intensity and rigour.

The business of the new normal

The Geneva Association is the leading international insurance think-tank for strategically important insurance and risk management issues. At the post COP21 signing-on event hosted by UN secretary Ban Ki Moon in April 2016, the chairman of the Association's board was emphatic about the insurance industry's commitment to 'climate resilience and disaster risk reduction measures'. At first blush, this may seem a disingenuous gesture - corporate interests guarding against future contingencies. However self-serving, the gesture actually does signal something notable. An industry, not known for its beneficence, is earnestly coming to terms with the reality of a world drastically altered by climate change.

Insurance industry groups have a steady stream of investigations into the effects of climate change. By 2009, research on risk and adaption had been prioritised and in that year a comprehensive report, 'The Insurance Industry and Climate

Change - Contribution to the Global Debate', was released. Since then, strategic campaigning has ramped up across the industry for public policy leaders, business coalitions and governments to co-ordinate planning and enact legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. Companies now routinely house specific units to address concerns and coordinate initiatives on climate change and the environment. The CEO of Swiss Re, a global leader in business, told a news conference last September that governments need be out in front of the issue: "Definitely we expect political courage to move in a direction that shows responsibility towards future generations and a certain interest in defending the sustainability of this planet."

In the United States, confronted by the devastation (and the payouts) caused by Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy, there is now recognition that the insurance industry needs to play an active role in adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. At this year's meeting of National Association of Insurance Commissioners, their Climate Change and Global Warming Working Group formulated a plan to drive insurers out of not just coal but all carbon-based investments. One influential commissioner had already signalled this direction, asking all insurance companies in his home state of California to divest from businesses dealing in thermal coal and announcing a requirement for insurance companies to annually disclose their carbon-based investments, including investments in oil, gas and coal.

Climate mainstreamed and militarised

In September 2015, former defence chief Admiral Chris Barrie released his advisory report on climate change in conjunction with the Climate Council. In it, he argued that in Australia climate change is an under-recognized problem for national and global security. Posing 'a significant and growing threat to human and societal wellbeing', defence forces need to understand the impacts of climate change as a 'threat multiplier' which can exacerbate other societal stress points - availability of food and water, human health, poverty, economic instability, fragile institutions, large scale population dislocation, and violent conflict over resources all get a mention. The report states bluntly that 'mainstreaming climate change into national military planning' is essential to prepare for what could be unprecedented disruption on a global scale.

This kind of disruption is already in evidence. The war in Syria has been explicitly linked to climate change with global warming intensifying the region's worst drought in 900 years. Water and food shortages, decimated farmland and

The war in Syria has been explicitly linked to climate change with global warming intensifying the region's worst drought in 900 years.

livestock, forcing population movement to cities already suffering from overcrowding and poverty and the influx of refugees from Iraq, on top of already unresponsive and repressive government policy combined to tip the country over a threshold into open conflict.

Recognition that climate change can worsen tensions and increase the risk of conflict within and between states is now a priority for military planners in the United States. In 2014, the Department of Defense released its Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap responding to climate change in two ways: adaption, the capacity to plan for potential impacts, and mitigation, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

By 2015 'combatant commands' were integrating climate-related impacts into their planning cycles with the requirement to monitor, analyse and incorporate climate risks into existing overall risk management measures. Although this brings no comfort, this year a top brass directive was issued for US forces to undertake war games training with allies to 'enhance capacity' and 'improve tactics' for tackling impacts linked to global warming.

It's interesting to note that both the Australian defence report on climate preparedness and the US adaption roadmap build in as part of their analysis the need for a strong action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Australian report puts it this way: "Global emissions must start tracking downward this decade if there is to be a chance of keeping the warming of the planet to below 2°C, and limiting the severity of climate change and its implications for security".

Stopping the boats in the time of climate change

We started with the ways that Australia is disengaged from the looming climate crisis, so let's end with a conjecture about how it is

engaged. In a 2008 report, the Environmental Justice Foundation calculated that if trends continue, global warming will create up to 150 million climate refugees over the next 40 years. Large parts of low-lying countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam could be under water and Pacific island nations will all but disappear. Desertification would stretch across Africa and glaciers used for drinking water in mountainous regions could melt away. Populations subjected to these massive upheavals will be on the move. They may even get onto leaky boats and strike out for other continents.

A grim scenario. And on the basis of it, a grim conjecture. Could it be that the current Australian punitive and unrelenting border security policy to 'stop the boats' is a rehearsal for the possibility of just such an eventuality? An unintended, even unconscious rehearsal, but a rehearsal nonetheless. And this rehearsal has been seen, and applauded by others. Australia's refugee policies are now being held up as a model worth emulating, especially in Europe, struggling to cope with a huge influx of dislocated people from the Middle East and Africa. Despite widespread condemnation for human rights abuses, the 'Australian solution' to keeping refugees out has become part of the political lexicon in discussions of and actions on border security.

So, from a certain angle, and with a foreboding sense of irony, Australia does become a world leader for action on climate change, but not in the space where it could be expected to be most 'innovative and agile' - the abundance of sun and wind and surrounding oceans call out the potential for a techno-renewable revolution. Instead, current border security policy may be our ignominious contribution.

John Langer is a volunteer at Friends of the Earth, Melbourne, and one of the presenters for Dirt Radio, FoE's weekly program on 3CR community radio.

"Global emissions must start tracking downward this decade if there is to be a chance of keeping the warming of the planet to below 2°C, and limiting the severity of climate change and its implications for security"

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Community Energy in Victoria: State of Play

Em Gayfer

The renewable energy sector has had a rough few years, with policy uncertainty at the federal level leading to lengthy periods of instability. This period led to jobs losses and stalling in investment, with shovel-ready projects across Victoria left without any capability to get off the ground.

The announcement of Victorian Renewable Energy Targets (VRET) of 25% by 2020 and 40% by 2025 by the Andrews Labor government has been welcomed as a way to boost investment and grow renewable energy. The VRET has provided an opportunity for government, industry and communities to come together to grow the sector, and to work together to smash the targets.

One growing area of renewable energy that stands to benefit from the VRET is community owned renewable energy (CORE) projects. Community energy projects provide a way for local people to be involved in energy systems and provide tangible local benefits as well as helping in the transition to 100% renewable energy.

With legislation on the VRET to make its way through the Victorian Parliament soon, there is now the opportunity to make sure the Andrews government creates best practice policies that grow CORE projects.

So, where are we now? Many community groups are creating innovative solutions to tackling climate change, establishing local renewable energy projects. In Victoria, however, community energy projects have faced a number of barriers.

In 2011, the Baillieu government enacted a number of anti-wind farm planning laws that posed huge challenges to the renewable energy sector as a whole. These included imposing 2 km 'veto zones' around proposed wind farm sites as well as creating arbitrary no-go zones where wind farms could not be built. These laws had a huge impact on community groups who were interested in setting up community wind projects similar to Hepburn Wind.

In the Macedon Ranges, the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group and Woodend Integrated Sustainability had plans to develop a community wind farm similar to Hepburn Wind for over six years. Baillieu's anti-wind laws sidelined the project for many years, however the tireless work of many volunteers has meant the project is still in the works. The group recently set up a wind mast for monitoring at the proposed site. Changes to legislation will be key for groups like this to pursue innovative projects that have a number of benefits. During the lead-up to the 2014 election, Yes2Renewables worked with the community in the Macedon Ranges to campaign for an end to the anti-wind laws. This led to the

Andrews Labor government going to the election with a promise to rip up the worst of the laws.

Since then, communities across Victoria have been working hard to drive a number of new community energy projects. There are currently six CORE projects operating in Victoria and 26 under development. Many communities still face barriers in getting their projects off the ground.

Whilst the Andrews government committed to removing the anti-wind laws, the community waits for them to act on this election promise. Meeting the VRET provides the impetus to remove restrictive planning laws preventing communities from building their own projects. The government is currently engaging with community energy groups through a number of different avenues that have the potential to create best practice policies and grow community energy.

Parliamentary Inquiry and Discussion Paper

The Victorian Parliament is currently conducting an inquiry into community energy projects to find out what the benefits are and how to implement best practice that will see community energy grow across the state. The inquiry recently had a public submissions phase that asked for the community to provide their opinions to the inquiry.

Yes2Renewables saw this as an opportunity to mobilise our supporters, launching a submissions drive to demonstrate communities are ready to smash the VRET. Our supporters joined us in calling on the inquiry to endorse three key policies to grow community energy throughout Victoria: commit to an ambitious number of community energy projects; support community energy projects with a financial mechanism as part of the VRET; re-establish Sustainability Victoria as the community energy support agency in collaboration with developing Community Powerhouses (<http://tinyurl.com/communitypowerhouses>).

The Andrews government has also recently released a discussion paper on CORE projects. This discussion paper is centred around three key challenges currently facing community energy projects: the definition of community renewable energy projects; the payment-in-lieu-of-rates methodology for community scale projects; and planning arrangements for community scale wind farms

These three issues are current major barriers for community energy projects that are yet to get underway. The Andrews government can show its commitment to community energy by addressing these barriers as it meets the Victorian Renewable Energy Target. The discussion paper is now open for submissions, and will close on November 28.

New energy jobs

The New Energy Jobs fund is another way the Andrews government is engaging with community energy groups, with many communities across the state receiving funding for projects. Funding announcements are currently being made, with a variety of projects already being announced. One example of a project that has received funding is the Strathbogie-Seymour Energy Alliance with a feasibility study for pumped hydroelectricity storage at two sites near Euroa and Seymour. The project is a collaboration between three local groups (Euroa Environment Group, BEAM Mitchell Environment Group and The Seymour We Want) and will look at using pre-existing infrastructure to create pumped hydro storage.

When asked how to create real social change at a recent Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group talk in Woodend, Kate Auty from the Seymour Energy Alliance said: "The secret is the ingenuity of communities coming up with their own solutions." *Yes2Renewables* is a strong supporter of communities

establishing their own renewable energy projects, and will continue to work with our key allies around Victoria to grow community power.

The Andrews Government plans to meet the VRET through a series of rolling renewable energy auctions that will build 5400 MW of new wind and solar farms across the state over 10 years. Communities are already getting organised to build their own small scale renewable energy projects, and play a key role in building the industry's social license.

Prioritising communities and local jobs in the VRET will be key. Projects like the Coonoor

Bridge Wind Farm built in Victoria to meet the ACT 100% Renewable Energy Target worked with farmers and the local community to establish a shared benefit sharing scheme. This enabled neighbours of the wind farm to become partial owners of the project.

Other proposals include community-developer partnerships, where community groups work directly with a developer on renewable energy projects. Projects that centre local communities have been shown to create more local jobs and investment than conventional commercial projects. By prioritising projects like this in the VRET we will see wind and solar farms built across the state that ring communities with them and create real local benefits.

Em Gayfer is a campaigner with Friends of the Earth's Yes2Renewables campaign.

Power for the people in the Macedon Ranges

Alastair Fleming

A game-changing renewable energy initiative is up and running here in the Macedon Ranges. Not only is this pioneering project delivering cheaper, clean electricity to tenants at the Black Forest Mill, outside Woodend, but it is also helping to reduce the use of fossil fuel-generated energy in the Macedon Ranges.

In a recent ReachTEL poll for Friends of the Earth, more than 68% of Victorians said they see a need for the state to "transition its energy use from coal to 100% renewables as a matter of urgency".

The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group (MRSG) has been committed to renewable energy for many years and now, with the assistance of a state government Renewable Energy Grant, the not-for-profit group has successfully installed a solar power system.

The Woodend Community Solar Project is producing 30 kW of clean energy from 160 solar panels mounted on one of the existing sheds.

Lily D'Ambrosio, Victorian Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, said: "This initiative at the Black Forest Timber Mill in Woodend is a great example of what can be achieved when locals and the government work together."

What makes this project unique, however, is the business model. Changes to state-based electricity retailing regulations, allowed for a solar power purchase agreement be set up between the MRSG and the mill owners; the electricity generated is sold to the mill tenants and any excess is fed back into the grid.

Revenue from the electricity is then returned to the community, via the Macedon Ranges Renewable Energy Fund, for the development of future community-based renewable energy projects in the Shire. Developed and managed by the MRSG, the Fund is seen as a key initiative to help drive community-led renewable energy development in the Ranges.

It is "a wonderful model ... continuing to reap the benefits of your initial investment and using it to really keep driving renewable energy and sharing it amongst the broader community", D'Ambrosio said at the launch of project.

MRSG President Ralf Thesing added: "The Mill project has been a great partnership between MRSG, the state government and the owners of the Black Forest Timber Mill. We are hoping other community partners will also come on board to help grow the fund".

Faced with the urgent task of addressing the extreme effects of climate change, more and more Victorian communities are starting to develop plans for their own energy security.

The Woodend Community Solar Project will be used as a blueprint to inspire and lead the change needed for a cleaner future.

Alastair Fleming is a member of the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group. www.mrsgonline.net.au, info@mrsgonline.net.au

Woodend Community Solar Project.
Photo by Bruce Hedge.



Attacks on renewables amid SA storm but the community isn't buying the spin

Pat Simons

Just moments after October's unprecedented storm in South Australia knocked over 20 transmission towers, cutting power across the state, fossil fuel backers pounced. Their goal? Use the blackout to defame renewables and protect their own interests. As emergency crews assisted South Australians during the extreme weather, federal Coalition Ministers exploited the natural disaster, rapidly blaming renewables. Their goal? Distract the public from their failure to act on climate change and prevent state governments from leading with their own ambitious renewable energy targets.

Adopting a bizarre strong man stance against renewable energy, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has never looked more like Tony Abbott. During his stint as PM, Abbott infamously cut the national Renewable Energy Target (RET), causing 2,500 people to lose their jobs and investment in renewables to drop by 90%.

Linking South Australia's blackout to wind and solar against all available evidence in the midst of a natural disaster was key to the federal Coalition's strategy.

Federal Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg used the subsequent media storm to call an "emergency" Council of Australian Government's (COAG) Energy Council Meeting. Using the guise of "energy security", the federal Coalition is now attempting to slow the growth of renewable energy and to protect the fossil fuel industry.

But the community isn't buying the spin

Using extreme weather to blame renewable energy - a key solution to climate change - is dangerous and absurd.

Recent polling confirms the public hasn't bought the anti-renewables spin. An Essential Poll found 60% of Australians believe the blackout would have happened regardless of how electricity is produced, including a majority of LNP voters.¹ Similarly, A Galaxy Poll found more than 70% of South Australians know the blackout was caused by the massive SA storm bringing down transmission towers.²

Building more distributed energy, like wind and solar combined with energy storage will make our energy system more resilient than relying on polluting fossil fuels.

"The fossil fuel lobby will do anything to stop our transition to 100% renewables," said

Leigh Ewbank, Yes 2 Renewables campaign coordinator. "They're prepared to sacrifice jobs, investment in regional communities, and our climate to protect their own interests."

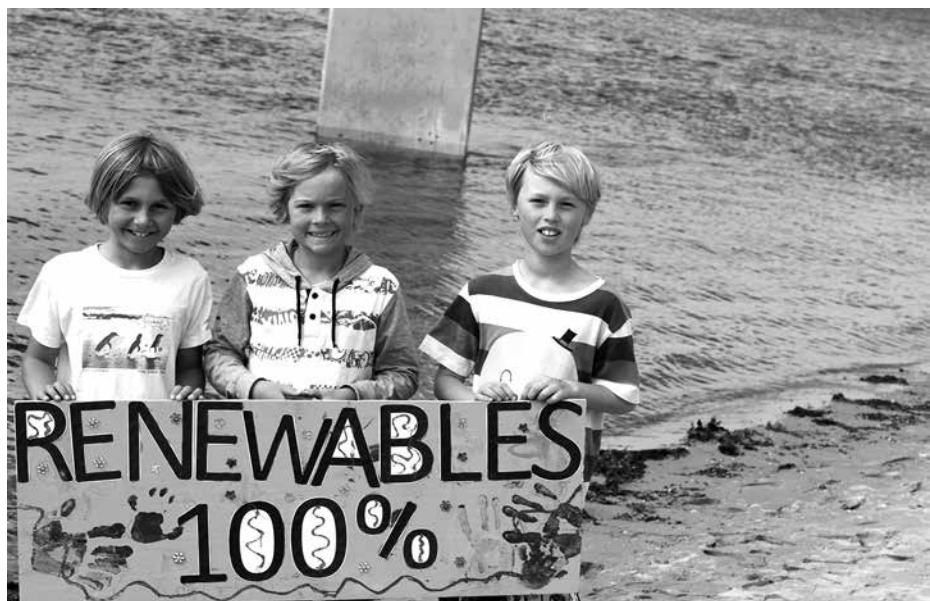
Y2R calls snap rally outside COAG

The COAG Energy Council was to meet in Melbourne, and with less than 24 hours notice Yes 2 Renewables teamed up with Solar Citizens and called a snap rally to on October 9. A dedicated group of around 25 people gathered at the Melbourne Convention Centre to hold government ministers to account and demonstrate the community wants clean renewable energy, not coal and gas. On the back of our successful campaign to establish a Victorian Renewable Energy Target of 40% by 2025, Yes 2 Renewables was ready to secure our win.

We were joined by community leaders from around Victoria to talk about their passion for renewable energy jobs, community power and climate action. Wendy Farmer, president of 'Voices of the Valley', spoke about their push for a just transition plan for the Latrobe Valley and how renewables can benefit community and workers. With the highly polluting Hazelwood coal fired power station likely to close next year, the community is calling for assistance from state and federal governments.

Farmer said: "Communities with coal mines are usually doing it the hardest with some of the highest unemployment rates: in the Latrobe Valley unemployment is around 10.7%. Thousands of manufacturing, construction and maintenance jobs will be created around Victoria as we transition to renewable energy and the

Climate rally on Phillip Island, 2015.
Photo by Marg Thomas



TAKE THE PLEDGE TO

#DefendRenewables



Valley can benefit from this as part of a broader transition plan for workers and the community.”

With the community demonstrating strong support, state energy ministers who are adopting ambitious renewable energy policies stood their ground, with the state renewable energy targets now recognised as an essential part of national action on climate change.

Defend renewables déjà vu

This isn't the first time we have rallied to Defend Renewables. A similar COAG meeting was called in Canberra in August 2016, following a coordinated scare campaign blaming wind and solar for energy price spikes in South Australia in mid-July. What the federal Coalition didn't want people to hear then was that gas companies showed evidence of market power abuse, driving up energy prices to maximise profits.³

The federal Coalition's goal at that COAG meeting was to undo gas moratoriums, slow down renewable energy efforts of the states and make way for expanding fossil fuels. Sound familiar?

That's why 100 people gathered in Canberra outside COAG to defend renewables. We made one simple demand – “Every State Every Territory: 100% Renewables” – calling on energy ministers to join the community in standing up to fossil fuel bullies, grow renewable energy and act on climate change.

Media blackout

Misinformation during the SA storm has highlighted systemic problems in Australia's mainstream media, including at the public broadcaster. Despite a number of experts noting that the storm caused the blackout, content analysis by *New Matilda* found a strong anti-renewables bias in the ABC's coverage of the storm.⁴ Combined with incendiary comments by Senator Nick Xenophon, former environment minister Greg Hunt and Malcolm Turnbull himself, this established a pattern that was repeated across radio, television and online media. Other media outlets have also been

criticised for inaccurate reporting on the SA storm and blackout.

In his *New Matilda* article, ‘Media Blackout: Aunty's Assault on Renewables’, Ben Eltham writes: “The ABC's coverage of the blackout is a good example of how a dominant frame, once established, can exert a long-lasting influence over media coverage of a particular event.”

So far, over 180 complaints were made to the ABC in response to political editor Chris Uhlmann's reporting of the storms, which may be close to a record for the public broadcaster.

As Yes 2 Renewables observed after the July power price spikes, anti-renewables misinformation has continued beneath the surface, re-emerging during key moments. Polling shows the public won't be duped, but misinformation and spin continue to have an insidious impact on our democracy.

Take the pledge to #DefendRenewables

Coordinated and relentless attacks on renewable energy have once again exposed the fossil fuel lobby's intent. They're trying to undermine renewable energy's reputation and intimidate states who are taking leadership, such as the ACT, Victoria, Queensland, Northern Territory, and South Australia. Yes 2 Renewables are ready to defend renewable energy.

But we can't do it alone. Will you take the Pledge to #DefendRenewables?

- Sign the pledge to show your support for renewable energy. You'll receive campaign updates and action alerts.
- Take a #DefendRenewables 'selfie' and share it on social media (remember to tag @Yes2Renewables). Email the pic to leigh.ewbank@foe.org.au.
- Join the Defend Renewables rapid response team to join urgent actions such as lobbying politicians, etc. Visit: www.melbourne.foe.org.au/pledgetodefendrenewables

Pat Simons is a campaigner with Friends of the Earth's Yes 2 Renewables campaign.

What the federal Coalition didn't want people to hear then was that gas companies showed evidence of market power abuse, driving up energy prices to maximise profits.

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Seven ways the Trans Pacific Partnership threatens people and the planet

Bill Waren – senior trade analyst,
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The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal is not so much about trade as it is about deregulation and forcing governments to pay corporations and wealthy investors for the cost of complying with environmental and other public interest safeguards. The TPP broadly restricts the policy space for governments to take effective environmental and climate action.

Unlike most international agreements, tribunals of trade lawyers would effectively enforce the TPP. Such tribunals could impose retaliatory sanctions like higher tariffs on the non-complying countries' exports or award money damages that can run into millions or even billions of dollars.

Until about 20 years ago, trade deals focused on reducing trade barriers like tariffs and quotas. Today's trade deals, by contrast, focus on curbing the authority of democratic governments and legitimate courts to regulate the global marketplace. Trade tribunals often treat environmental and public health regulations as trade barriers. Trade deals like the TPP focus on dismantling many regulations that are alleged to interfere with the profits of multinational corporations and wealthy foreign investors.

Multinational corporations have lined up behind the TPP, as have Wall Street banks and Big Oil. But over 1,500 public interest organisations, such as internet freedom groups, faith-based organisations, labour unions, women's & LGBT advocates and environmentalists, are standing up to oppose TPP.

It appears that President Obama wants to force a post-election, 'lame-duck' vote on the TPP. That is a unique moment in the political calendar when members of Congress who are retiring or have been voted out of office are least accountable to their constituents.

Here are seven ways that the Trans Pacific Partnership trade deal threatens people and the planet:

- 1) TPP investment tribunals subvert democracy. TPP would allow firms to turn to secretive international tribunals where they can sue governments for millions or billions of dollars if environmental or other public interest regulations interfere with expected future profits. This would discourage government action like restricting oil and gas drilling, imposing pollution controls, and limiting the use of fracking (hydraulic fracturing). TransCanada, for example, is using a similar provision in the North American Free Trade Agreement to sue the U.S. for US\$15 billion for stopping construction of the Keystone XL pipeline.
- 2) The TPP undermines sound climate policy. The TPP would ramp up global warming by increasing U.S. coal, oil and gas exports to the world. The TPP is designed to protect "free trade" in such dirty energy products shipped out of West Coast ports. The result would be worsened climate change from carbon emissions across the Pacific.
- 3) The TPP deal threatens bees. The TPP could thwart efforts to stop the use of bee-killing neonicotinoid (neonic) pesticides. Neonics are believed to be a leading cause of bee declines. But, multinational chemical companies want to use the TPP and similar deals to stop future action to save the bees and the crops that depend on bees for pollination.
- 4) TPP threatens deregulation of chemical safety standards. TPP could result in suits before trade tribunals imposing retaliatory trade sanctions such as higher tariffs on U.S. exports to force the roll back of effective state regulation in California and other jurisdictions of dangerous chemicals associated with breast cancer, autism, infertility and other illnesses.
- 5) TPP undercuts prudent food safety regulations. Food safety protections are also put at risk. The TPP would give foreign food exporters greater powers to challenge border inspections, as well as authorise legal attacks on food safety standards before corporate dominated trade and investment tribunals. This dirty deal would also substitute private food safety certifications for government inspections in many cases. In particular, TPP promises to unleash a tsunami of unsafe seafood exports to the United States. Vietnam and several other Pacific basin countries are notorious for their unclean and toxic factory fish farming operations.
- 6) TPP encourages GMOs. The TPP provides new protections for biotechnology and use of genetically modified organisms. Obligations are established for TPP countries to quickly approve GMO crops and products, unless very high standards of scientific certainty regarding the risk to health and the environment are met. GMO labeling requirements at the state or local level could be put at risk. In addition to that, significant patent protections are provided to biotech seed companies. All of this runs counter to a central tenet of sound environmental regulation, the "precautionary principle", the precept that deregulatory action should not be taken if the consequences are highly uncertain and potentially quite dangerous.
- 7) TPP puts family farms at risk. The TPP is likely to increase the volatility of agricultural markets, putting sustainable family farms at risk and increasing corporate control of markets and production practices.

No need for technophilic solutions to climate change

Jeremy Tager

Some of these technologies themselves increasingly resemble technified creatures from a dark world of myth. A beast that spews sulphur particles into the upper atmosphere, turning the earth a jaundiced yellow, or carbon dioxide-gobbling ice machines patrolling the poles.

The promise of the UN climate conference in Paris last December rapidly fades into an oblivion of inaction, a shadow world in which everyone says yes, but really means no. Our increasingly mad leaders tilt at windmills, convinced these are demons come to turn the lights out. The road we are on, populated with all of the mutant progeny of a capitalist system now consuming us, is dark, twisted and leads only deeper into the storm-riddled future.

The further we travel into this Boschian world, the harder it becomes to imagine sanity again, to imagine waking up one morning to find that we are committed to 100% renewables now, no more coal mines and a safe and sane way to draw CO2 out of the atmosphere.

A new paper by Hansen *et al.*, published in *Earth System Dynamics*, attempts to provide a sense of the possible and the sane in this increasingly febrile world. The paper argues that we can stay under a 1.5 degree increase in global temperatures using existing technologies and techniques that are co-beneficial – that is, good for the climate as well as the broader health of the planet.¹

Since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change came out with its tepid endorsement of geoengineering, particularly ‘Bio-Energy with Carbon Capture and Storage’ (BECCS), the mainstreaming of technological solutions to climate change has become louder and increasingly populated with technologies that are supposed to offer the hope of business-as-usual.

Some of these technologies themselves increasingly resemble technified creatures from a dark world of myth. A beast that spews sulphur particles into the upper atmosphere, turning the earth a jaundiced yellow, or carbon dioxide-gobbling ice machines patrolling the poles.

Hansen *et al.* dispense with these technologies on a number of grounds. First, they note that “if rapid phasedown of fossil fuel emissions begins soon, most of the necessary CO2 extraction can take place via improved agricultural and forestry practices, including reforestation and steps to improve soil fertility and increase its carbon content.”

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4. Hansen, J. *et al.* (2016). para 62
5. *Ibid* at para 40

Plant more trees, start growing food based on ecological rather than corporate principles and draw down CO2 with the judicious use of biochar. Hansen *et al.* show “that soil carbon sequestration and soil amendment with biochar compare favourably with other negative emission technologies with less impact on land use, water use, nutrients, surface albedo, and energy requirements.”

After reading dozens of papers on highly technical, risky and unproven ways of saving ourselves, Hansen *et al.*’s simple solutions, backed by science, feel like a moment of light.

The authors also explain why other technologies are problematic. BECCS, the current darling of the business-as-usual set, is a typical example.² It would require vast areas of land; it would compete for food producing land; it is energy intensive; carbon capture remains unproven at any useful scale and storage is similarly troubled with capacity, location and safety issues.

Most of the geoengineering technologies being proposed or investigated suffer from these or similar impediments.

Hansen *et al.* don’t bother with some of the more speculative, crazy technologies such as those suggested in Tim Flannery’s 2015 book, *Atmosphere of Hope*.³

We don’t have to be crazy. We don’t have to bury our CO2 in vast storehouses carved out of the sea-floor by monster machines not even designed yet.

I want to be optimistic and so do Hansen *et al.* but you can hear the fatigue in their words: “Despite widespread recognition of the risks posed by climate change, global fossil fuel emissions continue at a high rate that tends to make these [Paris] targets increasingly improbable.”⁴

The authors appeal to our ‘leaders’ to protect our children: “Continued high fossil fuel emissions unarguably sentences young people to either a massive, possibly implausible cleanup or growing deleterious climate impacts or both, scenarios that should provide both incentive and obligation for governments to alter energy policies without further delay.”⁵

Jeremy Tager is a campaigner with Friends of the Earth’s Emerging Tech Project

The great corporate takeover of our food

Louise Sales

The Bayer-Monsanto tie-up comes in the wake of two other proposed mega-mergers involving US companies DuPont and Dow Chemical, and Swiss company Syngenta and ChemChina. This reflects a trend towards a cartel of just 3 companies controlling most crop seeds, chemicals and the food supply globally.

A recent wave of proposed mergers – combined with attempts to circumvent genetic modified (GM) food regulations – would give GM crop companies unprecedented control over our food supply.

In September, it was revealed that Monsanto and Bayer have agreed to a \$66 billion merger – if they can get past competition regulations. The Bayer-Monsanto tie-up comes in the wake of two other proposed mega-mergers involving US companies DuPont and Dow Chemical, and Swiss company Syngenta and ChemChina. This reflects a trend towards a cartel of just 3 companies controlling most crop seeds, chemicals and the food supply globally.¹

Anti-competition regulators should block these mergers everywhere, particularly in the Global South. These companies already have a de facto monopoly over our food supply. The new mega companies would have even greater market power – allowing them to either outcompete or devour national enterprises.

Friends of the Earth Europe campaigner Adrian Bebb has labelled the tie-up a “marriage made in hell”. “This mega corporation will be doing its best to force damaging pesticides and GM seeds into our countryside,” he said.²

The deal also prompted a hostile reaction from the National Farmers Union in the US, which said the Bayer deal, along with other pending agricultural mergers, “are being made to benefit the corporate boardrooms at the expense of family farmers, ranchers, consumers and rural economies.”³

In an apparent attempt to get past anti-competition regulations, Bayer and Monsanto have been divesting assets around Australia. Bayer has pulled out of GM cotton research⁴ and Monsanto has sold its stake in WA grain breeder Intergrain back to the WA Government for an undisclosed sum.⁵

GM 2.0

Unfortunately, big biotech’s attempts to control the food chain don’t stop there. In recent years Dow, Syngenta, Bayer and Monsanto have been investing in a suite of risky new GM techniques, which industry refers to collectively as ‘New Plant Breeding Techniques’ or ‘gene editing’. Monsanto has been busily expanding its repertoire of new GM techniques in recent weeks, licensing CRISPR from the Broad Institute⁶ and zinc finger nuclease based techniques from Dow AgroSciences.⁷

At the same time, the GM giants are making a concerted push to have these emergent techniques escape GM laws in the United States, Europe and Australia. Industry is arguing that these techniques are much more precise than

older genetic engineering techniques – or even that they are not really genetic engineering at all – in an attempt to circumvent safety testing, labelling and public resistance to genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Austrian government agencies are among the few globally to consider the biosafety risks posed by new GM techniques. Their conclusion, over three separate, high-level reviews of the biosafety risks, is that there is insufficient knowledge regarding the risks posed by these techniques. On this basis, they argue that products derived from new GM techniques should require a comprehensive case-by-case risk assessment.⁸

The Norwegian Environment and Development Agencies also recently commissioned a review of these techniques. This concluded that further biosafety research needs to be performed before these techniques are commercialised.⁹

These techniques quite clearly pose similar risks to older GM techniques and need to be regulated as GMOs. Furthermore, existing regulations in Australia need to be strengthened – to end our regulators’ almost exclusive reliance on industry data.

The GM crop industry is writing the rules

The push by the GM crop industry to avoid the regulation of these techniques has already proven successful in the US, with the US Department of Agriculture saying it will not subject crops developed using CRISPR to the same rules as GMOs.¹⁰

Other countries have taken a more precautionary approach, with New Zealand stating that it will regulate crops developed using these techniques as GMOs. The New Zealand Government stated that “the rationale for our cautious approach is that New Zealand is an exporter of billions of dollars of food products and we need to be mindful of market perceptions as well as the science.”¹¹

The European Union has yet to make a decision on whether it will regulate these techniques as GM. The final word on the matter is likely to come from the European Court of Justice. It will rule in 18 months whether or not new GM techniques, including ODM, ZFN1, TALENs, and CRISPR-Cas, fall under EU GMO law.¹²

Unfortunately, in Australia our regulators – the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) – seem all too ready to allow products derived from these risky new techniques to go untested and unlabelled into our food chain.

In 2012 and 2013 FSANZ convened an expert panel – comprised almost entirely of genetic



engineers with gene technology patents – to look at whether these new GM techniques should be considered genetic engineering. Furthermore, FSANZ appears to have deliberately misled the Senate, in response to Senate questions, by stating “FSANZ is not aware that any members of the expert panel have potential conflicts of interest.”¹³ This was despite the chair of the panel Professor Peter Langridge – then Director of the Centre for Plant Functional Genomics – admitting a potential conflict of interest in email correspondence with FSANZ.¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the panel concluded that the majority of these techniques did not pose a significant food safety concerns and that they either be deregulated or undergo a simplified form of food safety assessment¹⁵ – conclusions strongly disputed by overseas regulators.¹⁶

Recent documents obtained by Friends of the Earth under Freedom of Information laws reveal that the OGTR has also been consulting with industry for at least two years on whether to regulate these techniques. The OGTR has invited a number of institutions undertaking biotechnology research to make submissions to a technical review of its gene technology regulations, stating that “while a commencement date for the review has not been set, submissions can be made at any time.” The OGTR also stated in a presentation to Institutional Biosafety Committees in April last

year that there is a: “*Challenge, role, opportunity for YOU – scientists and regulated organisations to ‘make the case’*”¹⁷

The rest of us, however, are only able to ‘make the case’ for regulation now that the OGTR has produced a discussion paper full of industry rhetoric outlining potential options.

It’s time our regulators stopped letting industry write the rules for them and put public health and our environment before private profit.

Take Action

Please tell the OGTR that you want food produced using these techniques to be assessed for safety and labelled as GM to preserve consumer choice: www.gmfree.org.au

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Mine voids: big party, now for the hangover

Michael West

Mining companies and regulators have gravely underestimated the costs of mine rehabilitation, leaving taxpayers in the gun for billions of dollars in clean-up costs, says Rick Humphries. He should know. Humphries was Rio Tinto's top adviser on land use before heading up mine rehabilitation for base metals group MMG. The environmental scientist has since "switched sides" to consult for conservation groups on mine closure.

"The problem is there is a very large and growing environmental liability and if it's not put in check it will cost taxpayers dearly, and result in large scale degradation of national resources," Humphries told us in an interview in July.

There are some 50,000 abandoned mine sites in Australia. Many are small and old. Others though, such as Century Zinc Mine, Ranger Uranium, and the first of the mega coal mines to close – Anglo American's Drayton and Rio Tinto's Blair Athol – are large, toxic and present a formidable challenge to close properly.

The humongous Ranger and Century open cut voids alone will cost around \$750 million to \$1 billion to rehabilitate and the residual risks and liabilities for their parent companies (Rio Tinto and MMG) are as yet unknown.

What has been missing in the clean-up debate so far however is specifics, detailed research that is of particular company exposures. It is only when investors come to grips with the costs of closure that company directors and regulators will properly address the challenge, says Humphries. So he has been doing the rounds of stockbrokers and institutional investors with analysis of Oz Minerals, MMG, ERA's Ranger Mine, Rio Tinto's Blair Athol Mine and Australia's dirtiest power generation assets, the Yallourn, Hazelwood and Loy Yang brown coal mines in Victoria.

The report, "Mine Rehabilitation and Closure Cost – a Hidden Business Risk", sheds light on the caprice and inaccuracy of closure provisions and how mining companies account for their liabilities.

Until now, there has been a "head-in-the-sand" approach to closure, which includes offloading assets to small companies, and delay-tactics such as putting mines on "care and maintenance".

"Mines aren't typically designed with closure in mind," says Humphries, "Mining is all about cash-flow. Closure is not in the corporate DNA".

His report, conducted for conservation group Lock The Gate, finds a systemic "low-balling" of closure costs which is "exposing the sector to increased public and political scrutiny and will eventually undermine the industry's social licence, increase costs and inhibit their ability to grow".

From a share market perspective, the most sensitive finding is likely the case of Oz Minerals. Oz Minerals operates the Prominent Hill mine, a large copper/gold deposit in outback South Australia.

The report found "significant under-estimation of the cost of rehabilitating the waste-rock dumps and tailings storage facilities by \$100 million to \$200 million".

"OZ Minerals' closure provision of \$30.9 million completely and massively under-estimates the closure liability by orders of magnitude."

The case study on the Chinese-controlled base metals miner MMG reflects a problem seen across the board with mining companies: the constant escalation of closure provisions. MMG inherited a closure provision of \$169 million in 2008 when it acquired the majority of Oz Minerals' assets. That has shot up to \$US805 million in 2015.

"The MMG case study illustrates two points. Firstly, mine rehabilitation provisions can be extremely unreliable and secondly closing mines is an expensive business. The publicly quoted closure cost figure of US\$378 million for Century dwarfs the total Oz Minerals provision at the time of MMG's acquisition (A\$169.1 million), suggesting OZ Minerals completely underestimated the scope of the closure task," the report notes.

The case of Century raises serious questions over the accuracy of the provisions for MMG's other assets, says Humphries, and it illustrates (along with the ERA case study below), "that mining companies have a habit of systemically underestimating the real cost of closure because the complexity, risks and costs of mine closure are poorly understood".

ERA's Ranger Uranium mine is the classic case of escalating cost estimates. Humphries details the continual revision of estimates over the years from \$149 million in 2008 to more than \$600 million this year.

Rio Tinto's Blair Athol mine enshrines a different challenge entirely, that of a major mining group flogging a depleted asset to a small player with little ability to fund a clean-up.

The deal is not done yet but an agreement was struck in mid-2016 for Rio to sell its Blair Athol coal mine to a small ASX-listed company TerraCom. The mine was sold for \$1, including Rio's slated \$79 million clean-up liability. But as the Humphries report notes, the financial assurance calculated by the government's methodology comes up with a rehab cost of twice that, \$160 million.

There are some 50,000 abandoned mine sites in Australia.

Institute for Energy Economics & Financial Analysis director Tim Buckley describes this as a “heads we win, tails you lose” scenario for TerraCom’s promoters. The company has \$150 million in debt and no equity, and its success rides on a bounce in the price of thermal coal. It has risen lately but, as Buckley says, thermal coal appears to be in structural decline.

So leveraged is TerraCom that its shareholders are destined to clean up if the coal price keeps rising but if their gamble doesn’t work, the clean-up costs will be lumped with taxpayers.

After all, Rio wasn’t making money when it shut Blair Athol at the apogee of the coal boom in August 2012. Humphries reckons opinions on the final cost vary between \$160 million to \$300 million. Other sources expressed hope that the presence of former Labor politicians on the TerraCom share register would not influence the final decision of the Queensland government to wave the deal through, or not.

Finally, there are the Latrobe Valley coal mines. Following the Hazelwood Inquiry into the Morwell coal mine fire, the Victorian Government raised the financial assurance for the Yallourn, Hazelwood and Loy Yang brown coal mines from a collective \$41 million to \$254 million. It took however the longest mine fire in the region’s history, in February 2014, and a subsequent state government inquiry to put focus on mine rehabilitation and deliver the five-fold revision in clean-up costs.

The Humphries report illuminates the challenge for the mining sector and state governments and it contains just five case studies. Mining has

brought significant national wealth to this country and now, with mines to close and commodity prices waning, the *quid pro quo* looms large. Should regulators and miners fail to meet the challenge, there will be significant reputation damage, says Rick Humphries.

It is inevitable that there will be a slew of disputes between governments, mining companies and environment groups, especially if mining companies hit the wall with insufficient financial assurance in place. The parlous financial position of US group Peabody is not promising in this regard.

Broadly, taxpayers will be burnt, as well as shareholders, unless the issues are addressed early.

The capacity for mining companies to relinquish their liabilities as they have in the past will be increasingly constrained by the diminishing appetite for state governments to shoulder their residual risks.

“This means Australian mining companies are likely to accrue a large portfolio of multi-decade liabilities over time as the current generation of very large coal, base metal and iron ore mines start to close,” says the report. Transparency is tonic for responsible regulation. Our largest miner BHP, for instance, does not make public the environmental liabilities for its Nickel West operations in Western Australia, even though it is trying to sell them. UBS estimates these alone at up to \$2 billion.

Equally worrying is the hotch-potch of public information available through various state agencies. There is no national reckoning either.

For the environment, the risks are clear, The Mary Kathleen uranium mine, once controlled by Rio, was rehabilitated and relinquished in 1986, winning an award for technical excellence at the time. The waste dump has since failed and the liability and attendant costs now reside with Queensland taxpayers. Mary Kathleen is now a ghost town. Radioactive waste has seeped into the water systems.

Reprinted from Michael West’s blog, www.michaelwest.com.au

www.michaelwest.com.au/mine-voids-big-party-now-for-the-bangover/ Rick Humphries July 2016 report, ‘Mine Rehabilitation and Closure Cost – a Hidden Business Risk’, is posted at www.tinyurl.com/rick-humphries

Leaked report reveals coal mine rehab costs

August 2016: A leaked Queensland government report estimates that taxpayers are set to foot a massive bill of \$3.2 billion in coal mine rehabilitation costs because the current financial assurance system is not covering the full cost of mine rehabilitation. The report shows that not only are the financial bonds held by coal companies completely inadequate to rehabilitate sites, but that on-ground progressive rehabilitation is in decline. www.lockthegate.org.au/leaked_government_report

Half a dozen ways out of rehab for coal companies

A report by Environmental Justice Australia details six ways in which coal companies can sidestep their obligations for mine rehabilitation:

1. Put a mine into ‘care and maintenance’ – it never officially closes and is not rehabilitated.
2. Run a mine at a loss until cash reserves run dry – taxpayers risk footing the bill should the company go bankrupt.
3. Just don’t do it – Rio Tinto’s Mount Thorley coal mine would cost \$2 billion to fill, and the NSW government decided ‘it would not be reasonable to impose a condition that requires Rio Tinto to completely or even partially backfill the final void’.
4. Selling a mine cheaply means the former owner is no longer liable for rehabilitation costs.
5. If an existing mine expands instead of closes, companies put off provisioning for rehabilitation costs in their financial statements.
6. A company can get a range discounts on the amount of financial assurance. In Queensland, mining companies can receive discounts of up to 30%.

https://envirojustice.org.au/sites/default/files/files/EJA_Dodging_clean_up_costs.pdf

Rise in plunder of Earth's natural resources

Alex Kirby

Humans' appetite for gnawing away at the fabric of the Earth itself is growing prodigiously. According to a new UN report, the amount of the planet's natural resources extracted for human use has tripled in 40 years.

rising consumption driven by a growing middle class has seen resources extraction increase from 22 billion tonnes in 1970 to 70 billion tonnes in 2010.

A report¹ produced by the International Resource Panel (IRP), part of the UN Environment Programme, says rising consumption driven by a growing middle class has seen resources extraction increase from 22 billion tonnes in 1970 to 70 billion tonnes in 2010.

It refers to natural resources as primary materials, and includes under this heading biomass, fossil fuels, metal ores and non-metallic minerals.

The increase in their use, the report warns, will ultimately deplete the availability of natural resources – causing serious shortages of critical materials and risking conflict. Growing primary material consumption will affect climate change mainly because of the large amounts of energy involved in extraction, use, transport and disposal.²

“The alarming rate at which materials are now being extracted is already having a severe impact on human health and people's quality of life,” says the IRP's co-chair, Alicia Bárcena Ibarra.

“We urgently need to address this problem before we have irreversibly depleted the resources that power our economies and lift people out of poverty. This deeply complex problem, one of humanity's biggest tests yet, calls for a rethink of the governance of natural resource extraction.”

The IRP says the information contained in the new report supports the monitoring of the progress countries are making towards achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³ It also shows the uneven way in which the materials exploited are shared.

The richest countries consume on average 10 times as much of the available resources as the poorest, and twice as much as the world average.

This total – almost three times today's amount – will probably increase the acidification of the world's waters⁴, the eutrophication of its soils and waters⁵, worsen soil erosion, and lead to greater amounts of waste and pollution.

The report also ranks countries by the size of their per capita material footprints – the amount of material required in a country, an indicator that sheds light on its true impact on the global

natural resource base. It is also a good way to judge a country's material standard of living.

Europe and North America, which had annual per capita material footprints of 20 and 25 tonnes in 2010, are at the top of the table.

China's footprint was 14 tonnes and Brazil's 13. The annual per-capita material footprint for Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and West Asia was 9-10 tonnes, and Africa's was below 3 tonnes.

Global material use has rapidly accelerated since 2000, the report says, as emerging economies such as China undergo industrial and urban transformation that requires unprecedented amounts of iron, steel, cement, energy and building materials.

Compounding the problems, there has been little improvement in global material efficiency since 1990. The global economy now needs more material per unit of GDP than it did at the turn of the century, the IRP says, because production has moved from material-efficient economies such as Japan, South Korea and Europe to far less materially-efficient countries such as China, India and some in south-east Asia.

The report says uncoupling the increasing material use from economic growth is the “imperative of modern environmental policy and essential for the prosperity of human society and a healthy natural environment”.

This will require investment in research and development, combined with better public policy and financing, creating opportunities for sustained economic growth and job creation.

The IRP also recommends putting a price on primary materials at extraction to reflect the social and environmental costs of resource extraction and use, while reducing consumption. The extra funds generated, it says, could then be invested in R&D in resource-intensive sectors of the economy.

It is concerned that the expanding demand for materials that low-income countries are likely to experience could contribute to local conflicts such as those seen in areas where mining competes with agriculture and urban development.

Reprinted from Climate News Network, 23 July 2016, <http://climatenewsnetwork.net/rise-in-plunder-of-earths-natural-resources/>

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Australian government must re-build trust of civil society – UN Special Rapporteur

In October, United Nations Special Rapporteur Michel Forst called on the Australian government to dispel civil society's growing concerns about the 'chilling effect' of its recent laws, policies and actions constraining the rights of human rights defenders.

"I was astonished to observe mounting evidence of a range of cumulative measures that have levied enormous pressure on Australian civil society," said Forst on the situation of human rights defenders at the end of his fact-finding visit to Australia.

Forst found a number of detrimental measures which include a growing body of statutory laws, at both federal and state levels, constraining the rights of defenders. "These range from intensifying secrecy laws to proliferating anti-protest laws, from the stifling Border Force Act to the 'Standing' bill shrinking environmental access to courts," he said.

"These laws have not only accentuated the disparity between Government's declared commitments at international forums and their implementation within the country," Forst noted, "but they have also aggravated the situation after the drastic defunding of peak bodies by the Government, following their advocacy or litigation on such topical issues as immigration, security, environment and land rights protection."

In his preliminary observations, Forst noted that Community Legal Centres are facing a cut of nearly one third of their budget nationally, and that Environmental Defenders Offices and the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples have completely been defunded by the federal government. Those that continue receiving funds have to abide by the so-called 'gagging' clauses in their funding agreements, instructing them against 'lobbying' the government or 'engaging in public campaigns'.

"In addition, I was astounded to observe what has become frequent public vilification of rights defenders by senior government officials, in a seeming attempt to discredit, intimidate and discourage them from their legitimate work. The media and business actors have contributed to

this stigmatization," the Special Rapporteur warned. "Environmentalists, whistleblowers, trade unionists and individuals like doctors, teachers, and lawyers protecting the rights of refugees have borne the brunt of the verbal attacks."

Forst's preliminary report states: "In recent years, state and federal governments attempted to undermine the ability of human rights defenders to protect environment through political advocacy and litigation. The targeting of advocacy by environmental organisations could be seen as part of broader intent by the Government to stifle criticism by community organisations. However, it can also be closely linked to government lobbying by the fossil fuel industry, which vehemently opposes the use of strategic litigation by environmental activists. The opposition to environmental defenders have taken the form of funding cuts, threats to the deductible gift recipient status of environmental organisations and efforts to vilify advocacy by environmental organisations."

"Even the president of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Professor Gillian Triggs, faced Government's intimidation and public questioning of her integrity, impartiality and judgement, after the Commission's inquiry into the child harm in immigration detention," the expert said.

Forst noted that "the Australian Government has historically made commendable efforts in pursuit of its human rights obligations, so it is unfortunate that the combination of detrimental laws and practices of the Government has recently instilled a 'chilling effect' on the Australian civil society."

"This situation can be reversed and improved. The Government should start re-building confidence of human rights defenders," he said. "For that purpose, I urge the Government to consider adopting a national action plan on human rights, through meaningful consultation with civil society."

The UN Special Rapporteur expressed his readiness to continue a constructive dialogue with authorities to identify ways to help ensure an enabling environment for human rights defenders in Australia. During his two-week visit, carried out at the invitation of the Australian government, Forst met with a vast range of federal and state officials, members of parliament and the judiciary, statutory bodies, as well as human rights defenders and representatives of civil society, media and businesses.

Michel Forst (France) has extensive experience on human rights issues including experience as the Director General of Amnesty International (France) and Secretary General of the first World Summit on Human Rights Defenders in 1998. Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council. Special Procedures are independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms of the Human Rights Council that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts are independent from any government or organisation.

Forst will present a comprehensive report with his findings and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2017. His preliminary report is posted at www.tinyurl.com/ohchr-oz

Mapuche and Aboriginal Struggles for Indigenous Land

Marisol Salinas

For over 500 years the Mapuche People have been fighting. First against the Spanish crown invasion, second the Chilean invasion and now the invasion of the multinational corporations.

The Chilean state in 1887 signed a treaty with the Mapuche People confirming their possession of their territory. This treaty has not been respected. Currently, the Chilean state militarizes the communities that are fighting for their land, called in Chilean language “communities in conflict”. ‘Conflict’ in this context means communities that are defending their land from the illegal plunder and displacement from multinational corporations and non-indigenous occupiers.

The Mapuche people live at the moment all around Chile and Argentina but the majority are concentrated in the Ninth Region in the south of Chile and in Argentina in the Bariloche, Neuquen and surrounding areas. Mapuche people in both countries are defending their land and themselves from multinational corporations and the state.

Repression from the Chilean state, represented by the military and the police, is giving strength to the Mapuche people to continue fighting for their land. There are over 8000 landless Mapuche who are in the process of recuperating their land which was expropriated by non-indigenous foreign occupiers, multinationals corporations and the Chilean state.

There are several educative projects organised by the Mapuche communities to recuperate their culture and language. Most of their communities are in the process of teaching their children *Mapudungun* (“Language of the Land”) and all the traditional ceremonies. Between the communities they organise the *troika* (trade) by which they exchange what they produce. They also organised the *Tragun* (general meeting) where different community leaders discuss new ways to organise.

For centuries, the Chilean state has been using lies and religion to manipulate and divide Mapuche people creating rivalries between Mapuche communities, but today more than ever leaders from the different communities are getting together to organise and fight back.

The Chilean state applies Pinochet-era anti-terror laws exclusively to Mapuche activists when they protest, and leaders are routinely jailed until their case is heard, which can be anywhere up to or over a year under these laws. At present there are over 40 Mapuche political prisoners in Chile.

Thanks to the support of some human rights lawyers, these Mapuche leaders have been able to prove their innocence. Every time the police jail Mapuche leaders from one particular community, the relatives and members of the other communities go every day to the jail to protest outside.

The anti-terrorist law allows the Chilean state to use witnesses who can cover their face and transform their voices when accusing Mapuche leaders. There have been over 30 cases of Mapuche leaders jailed with accusations of stealing an animal, burning a truck, carrying a gun or knife, disobedience, or organising protests, but all these charges have been proven to be made by the Chilean police and non-indigenous land occupiers as a way to repress them and make them an example for the rest of the communities.

Mapuche who have been displaced from their land live in the main cities, facing daily racism, humiliation and discrimination. They have found the strength to fight back for their culture, teaching themselves their language and maintaining connections with their communities in the south.

The Mapuche struggle is important, but no more important than the struggles of all the indigenous communities around the world. What Mapuche communities are facing today has happened and continues to happen to many indigenous communities globally. We are learning from our brothers and sisters around the world how to be strong and fight back.

At the moment, many communities have been able to move back to their land. The recuperation of the land is a long and difficult process, but the connection with the land is so strong that no matter if the police come and evict them and put them in jail, the community will come back, over and over. Because Mapuche means “people of the land”, so without land, you cannot be a Mapuche.

And this is just the beginning. The Mapuche people are fighting for their land, sovereignty and autonomy for the Mapuche nation in the Wallmapu. The Mapuche people have been trying to dialogue with the Chilean government, without any positive response or willingness to talk about Mapuche indigenous land issue. The last Mapuche attempt to be heard by the current Chilean government of Michelle Bachelet has failed one more time.

Aboriginal and Mapuche solidarity



The repression continues and currently many communities are militarised, and during the land recuperation process the Mapuche people have to face violence, surveillance, humiliation, intimidation and abuse from police, the military, non-indigenous occupiers and paramilitary security forces.

Just recently, on September 28, the Special Forces Police violently raided the Mapuche community of Coñomil Epuleo in Ercilla (southern Chile) with a number of bullet-proof police cars, cannons shooting chemical powder / tear gas and government helicopters.

During the raid José Coñalínco, a Mapuche leader, was shot in the face by police in his backyard in front of his family.

This is a continuation of the repression, militarisation and violence from the Chilean

police and state, displayed earlier in September, when Chilean police shot their guns as part of the violent eviction of indigenous Mapuche leaders (including elders and children) from their protest in the CONADI building in Wallmapu, Temuco at 5am on 7 September 2015.

Even more recently, our lagmien (brother) Moises Lienqueo from the Antinao community from Pidima-Ercilla was wounded by police. The special police forces used tear gas bombs and extreme violence to raid the Antinao community, shooting indiscriminately at close range no matter if there were children, women and elderly present. The traditional media did not show what happened and tried to portray this as a confrontation between the police and the community. That is why alternative media is so important, we need to support and create our own First Nations media to stop the corporate press colonising our voices.

The communities still have some differences but they know very well who is the enemy and they unite and work together and concentrate on what is best for the communities.

Marisol Salinas is Project Co-ordinator of Mapuche Aboriginal Struggles for Indigenous Land (MASIL). www.facebook.com/MASILproject

Moonscaping: loss of vegetation in the suburbs

Anne Tan

Take a walk along any street in the suburban Melbourne municipality of Whitehorse. Before long you will have found an example of *moonscaping*, a practice in which housing blocks intended for residential development are savagely razed and denuded of any vegetation following demolition of existing structures. Keep on with your travels and you will see block after block waiting to be developed, or in various stages of development. Common to these sites is that they are treeless with every remnant vegetation ripped out to facilitate bigger or higher density development on the land.

Moonscaping is the most appropriate name for this - i.e., total clearing of sites as a precursor to development rather than an attempt to incorporate existing vegetation. Moonscaping has a devastating impact on native species of most residential and commercial buildings. It is common for developers to remove most of the vegetation and even topsoil. This reduces construction costs by allowing equipment ready access to the construction site.

The loss of native vegetation has a negative impact on native animal diversity, including a dramatic decline in richness of bird species. Following construction, areas of paving plus replanting with non-native species further reduce habitat. Such construction renders it impossible to retain the distinctive vegetation character and compromises the available space for replacement vegetation. One way to preserve

remnants in housing developments is to retain predevelopment vegetation.

Because landscape alteration typically results in modification of native vegetation cover, leading in turn to a loss of habitat for many species, it is incumbent on Council planners to design, regulate and enforce sustainable urban development guidelines. The retention of small vegetation patches can make an important contribution to biological conservation in human-modified landscapes.

Wildlife corridors, i.e., physical linkages between patches of native vegetation, contribute to landscape connectivity and may facilitate habitat connectivity for some species. Such corridors facilitate the movement of animals and birds through sub-optimal habitat. Wildlife corridors provide habitat for resident populations and prevent and reverse local extinctions by recolonisation of empty patches.

Streetscape vegetation plays an important role in influencing bird communities. Studies have reported on the prevalence of native plants leading to high native species richness, whereas exotic and newly-developed plants lead to more introduced and fewer native species.

In conclusion, it is argued that habitat fragmentation and landscape change wrought by moonscaping poses a dramatic threat to the leafy environs of Whitehorse and that a concerted planning regimen is urgently required to arrest further loss.

The wrong side of history: Australia and extended nuclear deterrence

Dimity Hawkins with Julie Kimber

Between them, the US and Russia hold almost 93 per cent of the 15,395 nuclear weapons in the world.

There has been much hand wringing at the thought of a Trump presidency. One issue has caused considerable alarm in foreign policy circles. If, by some miracle, Trump succeeds in November, he will have his hand on the nuclear trigger. But this concern, while great political fodder, is dangerously simplistic. It presupposes that there are “safe hands” when it comes to nuclear weapons. There are not.

The US currently has around 7,000 nuclear weapons.¹ Hundreds of these are on hair-trigger alert, able to be launched within minutes. Between them, the US and Russia hold almost 93 per cent of the 15,395 nuclear weapons in the world. While the global community has banned other indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction, it is a bitter legacy of the Cold War, with its false belief in the MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) doctrine, that these are yet to be banned. That doctrine has morphed over the years into a framework of nuclear deterrence. A number of governments around the world have played a double game; supporting nuclear disarmament on the one hand, while relying on nuclear powers for their supposed defence on the other.

One such government is our own. Despite consecutive Australian governments’ insistence on support for nuclear disarmament, for more than two decades we have used nuclear weapons in our security policy through the principle of Extended Nuclear Deterrence (END).

END is based on the assumption that the US would offer a nuclear response to Australia as a select protégé ally in the event of a nuclear threat or attack. Such arrangements are publicly documented between the US and NATO states, Japan, and South Korea. Less transparent is the basis for Australia’s claim of US END support.

The first official articulation of the position can be seen in the 1994 *Defence White Paper*,² which professed both a reliance on, and support for, a US nuclear capability to “deter any nuclear threat or attack on Australia.” Importantly, the paper also noted that reliance on END was an “interim” measure until a total ban on nuclear weapons could be achieved. Each subsequent Defence White Paper has continued to assert the reliance on US nuclear weapons.

This year’s *Defence White Paper*³ though created more ambiguity about the END arrangement. Twenty-two years after its first articulation, END is no longer a temporary aberration but is instead a stated conventional defence strategy. As the paper claimed, “only the nuclear and conventional military capabilities of the United States can offer effective deterrence against the possibility of nuclear threats against Australia”.

The risk here is that we normalise both the need for and use of nuclear weapons.

Australian *Defence White Papers* have offered no clarification on the conditions under which nuclear weapons would be used on behalf of Australia. Given the known humanitarian, environmental and cultural devastation caused by use of nuclear weapons,⁴ significant questions remain. Under what circumstances would policy makers and defence experts consider justifying the use of nuclear weapons in Australia’s name? These weapons are not mere window dressing, nor are they simply a cautionary tale. Nuclear security expert Bruce Blair states that US nuclear plans “envision the actual use of nuclear weapons in a wide range of situations including scenarios in which deterrence has already failed or is expected to fail imminently.”⁵

Anyone watching US President Barack Obama’s speech in Hiroshima in March 2016 might be mistaken for thinking his pledges to end the nuclear weapon threat were sincere. His statement that, “*Among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them,*” would seem to undermine the utility of nuclear deterrence, but the reality is different.

According to analysts at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the US plans to spend “[US]\$348 billion during 2015–24 on maintaining and comprehensively updating its nuclear forces.” They note other estimates that the modernisation program “may cost up to \$1 trillion over the next 30 years.”⁶ Despite Trump’s assertion that countries under the US END umbrella should be developing their own nuclear capacity,⁷ neither Trump nor Clinton are likely to discontinue these nuclear renewal programs.

Most of the other eight nations who possess these weapons are undertaking systematic and intentional renewal also.⁸ For example the UK Parliament voted in favour of a renewal program for their fleet of Trident nuclear submarines in July 2016. Theresa May, newly appointed UK Prime Minister, was asked before the vote in Parliament whether she would authorise a nuclear strike that could kill 100,000 people. She answered unequivocally, yes.⁹

For Australia, the change in presidential leadership in the US provides an opportunity to rethink defence relationships, especially as they relate to nuclear weapons. Australia has a chance to strike a new path, actively challenging the presumption of END in our defence policies.

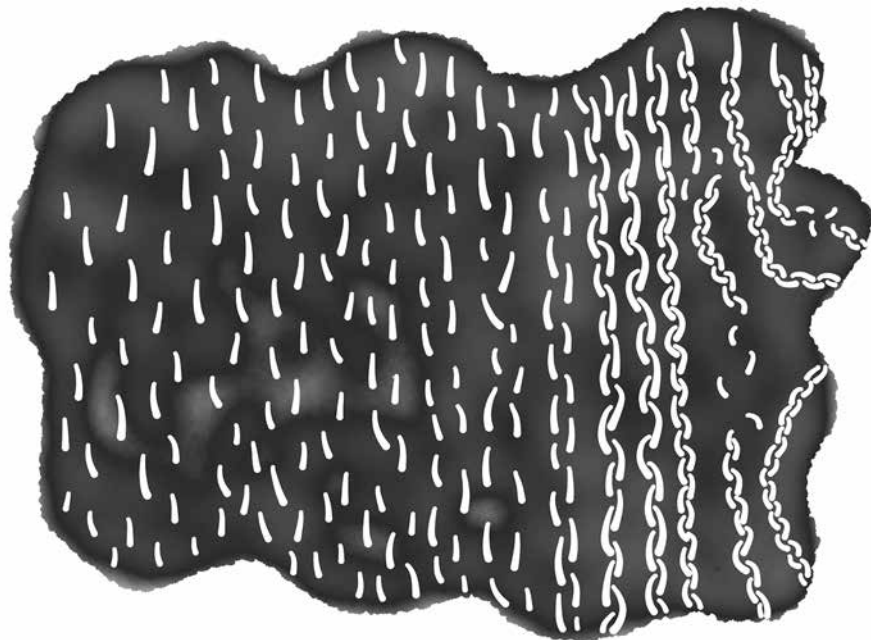
END is a concept that sits uneasily with Australia. As a highly militarised Middle Power state in the

region, Australia has the 13th highest defence budget in the world,¹⁰ and is in the top five nations for arms imports.¹¹ But it has few, if any, discernible nuclear threats of its own to counter.

The revival of concern about the humanitarian impacts of these weapons¹² is shifting old assumptions. Growing impatience with the slow pace of change and the continual delays in meeting even the most basic of expectations in relation to nuclear disarmament has meant calls for a ban on such weapons are growing internationally and now include the majority of UN member states.

Australia's reliance on END keeps us on the wrong side of history. And it has led previous governments¹³ and the current government¹⁴ to actively oppose the growing calls for a ban on nuclear weapons. It is time this changed.

Instead of blindly following the nuclear policies of the United States into whatever a future presidency may envisage, it is time to consider carefully a non-nuclear defence for Australia, and to challenge all claims – surrogate or otherwise – to nuclear weapons.



'Black Mist White Rain, Break the Nuclear Chain'.

By Zachlan Keaney-Hawkins.

Dimity Hawkins is a PhD candidate at Swinburne University researching nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific. She has been involved in activism around nuclear disarmament for many years, including through Friends of the Earth, Reaching Critical Will, the Medical Association for Prevention of War, and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. Julie Kimber is a Senior Lecturer in Politics and History at Swinburne University and co-editor of the Journal of Australian Studies.

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UN votes to negotiate nuclear weapons ban in 2017

The United Nations on October 27 adopted a landmark resolution to launch negotiations in 2017 on a treaty outlawing nuclear weapons. This historic decision heralds an end to two decades of paralysis in multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts.

At a meeting of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, which deals with disarmament and international security matters, 123 nations voted in favour of the resolution, with 38 against and 16 abstaining. The resolution will set up a UN conference beginning in March 2017, open to all member states, to negotiate a "legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination".

Despite arm-twisting by a number of nuclear-armed states, the resolution was adopted in a landslide. Shamefully, Australia was among

the countries voting against the resolution (www.icanw.org/campaign-news/results).

The UN resolution came just hours after the European Parliament adopted its own resolution inviting European Union member states to "participate constructively" in next year's negotiations. The 27 UN resolution follows three major intergovernmental conferences examining the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, held in 2013 and 2014. Following those conferences, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (www.icanw.org) was instrumental in garnering support for a 127-nation diplomatic pledge, known as the humanitarian pledge, committing governments to cooperate in efforts "to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons".

Africa Down Under: Tales of Australian Woe on the 'Dark Continent'

Dave Sweeney

Stories of corruption, dirty dealing and corner cutting are not uncommon in the world of mining and resource extraction, especially in the developing or majority world. It is a tough trade where the high-visibility clothing is often in stark contrast to the lack of transparency surrounding payments and practises.

No doubt the tall tales flowed along with the cocktails at the 'Africa Down Under' mining conference in Perth in September, an annual event that sees Australian politicians join their African counterparts alongside a melange of miners, merchants and media (www.africadownunderconference.com).

According to the organisers: "The ancient land mass of Africa is without question the world's greatest treasure trove. A new era of joint ventures with juniors and grub-staking is taking place. The action across the continent is taking place hard and fast there could not be a better time to explore the options and hear the stories from the people who are unlocking the wealth of the formerly 'Dark Continent'."

While the agenda for conference participants seemed clear, the benefits for communities in Africa are less so. Recent years have seen a marked increase in Australian mining operations and ambitions in Africa with a major increase in the number of Australian mining companies and resource service companies active in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Over 150 publicly listed companies are operating in more than 30 African nations.

There have been new allegations of Australian companies involved in irregular and illegal practices off-shore, including confirmation that the Australian Federal Police are actively investigating trouble prone Sundance Resources over bribery allegations linked to its Mbalam-Nabeba iron ore project in Congo.

But Sundance is not the only Australian miner generating headlines and heartache. Paladin Energy's contaminating uranium operations, controversy over Anvil and state repression in Congo, MRC's exit from its Xolobeni titanium project on South Africa's Wild Coast following the murder of anti-mining advocate Bazooka Rhadebe earlier this year.

The list goes ever on and the details - some of which are documented in a powerful report by the International Consortium of Independent Journalists - are deeply disturbing (www.icij.org/project/fatal-extraction).

As this decade began, the Human Rights Law Resource Centre expressed the situation clearly stating: "Many Australian companies, particularly mining companies, can have a severe impact on human rights throughout the world, including

the right to food, water, health and a clean environment. Despite this, successive governments lack a clear framework of human rights obligations for Australian corporations operating overseas. This is particularly problematic in countries with lax or limited regulations."

There is no argument against the fact that economic and wider benefits can and do flow from extractive operations in Africa. But so too does great damage and inequity. The policy and performance challenge is simple to state and very difficult to deliver - how to maximise the widest benefit and minimise the adverse impacts.

The official Australian line, strongly promoted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is that "mining offers African countries an unparalleled opportunity to stimulate growth and reduce poverty. If well managed, the extractives sector can drive innovation, generate revenue to fund critical social services and upgrade productive physical infrastructure, and directly and indirectly create jobs."

Three little words out of this descriptor make a world of difference: *if well managed*.

Expanding the extractives industry in regions with major governance, capacity and transparency challenges is a concern for communities and civil society groups in both Australia and Africa. The absence of a robust regulatory regime in many African countries can see situations where Australian companies are engaged in activities that would not be acceptable practise at home.

This is amplified by the fact that many of the Australian companies active in the African mining sector are juniors with limited capacity, scant accountability and little or no operational experience or proven compliance ability.

Tracey Davies, a lawyer with the South African-based Centre for Environmental Rights told Fairfax media last year that there is a widespread and "very strong perception that when Australian mining companies come here they take every advantage of regulatory and compliance monitoring weaknesses, and of the huge disparity in power between themselves and affected communities, and aim to get away with things they wouldn't even think of trying in Australia".

The mining sector always makes a difference, but it is not always a positive one. There are too many examples of Australian mining activities in Africa ending in corruption, environmental damage or community disruption for us to simply accept pro-industry rhetoric. There is a clear need for increased transparency, responsibility and support for affected communities. And a clear need for independent proof, not industry promises.

Stories of corruption, dirty dealing and corner cutting are not uncommon in the world of mining and resource extraction, especially in the developing or majority world.

SA Citizens' Jury rejects nuclear waste dump plan

On November 6, two-thirds of the 350 members of a South Australian government-initiated Citizens' Jury rejected the government's plan to import 138,000 tonnes of high-level nuclear waste and 390,000 cubic metres of intermediate-level nuclear waste as a money-making venture.¹

The Jury was a key plank of the government's attempt to manufacture support for the dump plan, and followed the SA Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission which released its final report in May 2016.²

The SA government will come under strong pressure to abandon the nuclear waste import plan in the wake of the Citizens' Jury's vote. Roman Orszanski, climate and energy campaigner with Friends of the Earth Adelaide, said: "Three thousand people protested against the proposed nuclear waste dump outside Parliament House on North Terrace on October 15 and there will be more protests and bigger protests if the Premier attempts to push ahead."³ Dr Jim Green, national nuclear campaigner with Friends of the Earth Australia, said: "Despite the pro-nuclear bias of the Royal Commission³ and SA government's so-called consultation process⁴, the Citizens' Jury has had the good sense to send a clear 'no' message to Jay Weatherill. South Australians do not want the state turned into the world's nuclear waste dump. The Premier has repeatedly said that he will respect the Jury's decision and now he must rule out any further work on his ill-considered nuclear frolic. More than \$10 million has already been wasted promoting the dump plan and any further expenditure of taxpayers' money should be ruled out."

"The Premier said he will respect the views of Aboriginal Traditional Owners and it is clear that an overwhelming majority of Traditional Owners are opposed to the high-level nuclear waste dump plan.⁵ The Citizens' Jury should be congratulated for showing respect to Traditional Owners and the Premier must now do the same by abandoning the plan," Green said.

"Jay's jury has said no", said Tauto Sansbury, chairperson of the Aboriginal Congress of South Australia. "The Premier should now listen to the people and respect this clear decision."

Karina Lester, chairperson of Yankunytjatjara Native Title Aboriginal Corporation, said: "This is a strong decision from randomly selected and



very diverse group of South Australians who have had the benefit of studying the Royal Commission Report and hearing information from experts in various aspects of the proposal. It was positive to hear the jurors acknowledging the need for Traditional Owner's voices to be heard. I thank the clear majority of Jurors for this decision."

The Adelaide *Advertiser*, a Murdoch tabloid, has been heavily promoting the nuclear dump plan but there was no attempt to spin the Citizens' Jury's rejection of the plan. Journalist Daniel Wills wrote: "This "bold" idea looks to have just gone up in a giant mushroom cloud. When Premier Jay Weatherill formed the citizens' jury to review the findings of a Royal Commission that recommended that SA set up a lucrative nuclear storage industry, he professed confidence that a well-informed cross-section of the state would make a wise judgment. Late Sunday, it handed down a stunning and overwhelming rejection of the proposal. Brutally, jurors cited a lack of trust even in what they had been asked to do and their concerns that consent was being manufactured. Others skewered the Government's basic competency to get things done, doubting that it could pursue the industry safely and deliver the dump on-budget. It seems almost impossible now to see a way through for those in Cabinet and the broader Labor Party who have quietly crossed their fingers and backed the idea of taking the world's nuclear waste."

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Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story

Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story

Elizabeth Tynan

September 2016

\$34.99

NewSouth Books

www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/atomic-thunder

In September 2016 it was 60 years since the first British mushroom cloud rose above the plain at Maralinga in South Australia. The atomic weapons test series wreaked havoc on Aboriginal communities and turned the land into a radioactive wasteland.

In 1950 Australian prime minister Robert Menzies blithely agreed to atomic tests that offered no benefit to Australia and relinquished control over them – and left the public completely in the dark. *Atomic Thunder* reveals the devastating consequences of that decision. After earlier tests at Monte Bello and Emu Field, in 1956 Australia dutifully provided 3,200 square kilometres of South Australian desert to the British Government, along with logistics and personnel.

How could a democracy such as Australia host another country's nuclear program in the midst of the Cold War? Elizabeth (Liz) Tynan reveals how Australia allowed itself to be duped. Maralinga was born in secret atomic business, and has continued to be shrouded in mystery decades after the atomic thunder stopped rolling across the South Australian test site.

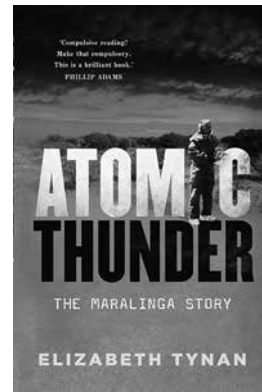
Atomic Thunder is arguably the most comprehensive account of the whole saga, from the time that the explosive potential of splitting uranium atoms was discovered, to the uncovering of the extensive secrecy around the British tests in Australia many years after the British had departed, leaving an unholy mess behind.

Phillip Adams writes: "Just as witnesses to our A-bomb tests turned their backs on the blasts, Australia turned its back on the memory of one of the most diabolical times in our history. Compulsive reading? Make that compulsory. This is a brilliant book."

Below we reprint an article by Liz Tynan published in *The Conversation*:

Sixty years on, the Maralinga bomb tests remind us not to put security over safety

It is September 27, 1956. At a dusty site called One Tree, in the northern reaches of the 3,200-square-kilometre Maralinga atomic weapons test range in outback South Australia, the winds have finally died down and the countdown begins.



The site has been on alert for more than two weeks, but the weather has constantly interfered with the plans. Finally, Professor Sir William Penney, head of the UK Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, can wait no longer. He gives the final, definitive go-ahead.

The military personnel, scientists, technicians and media – as well as the “indoctrinee force” of officers positioned close to the blast zone and required to report back on the effects of an atomic bomb up close – tense in readiness.

And so, at 5pm, Operation Buffalo begins. The 15-kilotonne atomic device, the same explosive strength as the weapon dropped on Hiroshima 11 years earlier (although totally different in design), is bolted to a 30-metre steel tower. The device is a plutonium warhead that will test Britain's “Red Beard” tactical nuclear weapon.

The count reaches its finale – *three... two... one... FLASH!* – and all present turn their backs. When given the order to turn back again, they see an awesome, rising fireball. Then Maralinga's first mushroom cloud begins to bloom over the plain – by October the following year, there will have been six more.

RAF and RAAF aircraft prepare to fly through the billowing cloud to gather samples. The cloud rises much higher than predicted and, despite the delay, the winds are still unsuitable for atmospheric nuclear testing. The radioactive cloud heads due east, towards populated areas on Australia's east coast.

Power struggle

So began the most damaging chapter in the history of British nuclear weapons testing in Australia. The UK had carried out atomic tests in 1952 and 1956 at the Monte Bello Islands off Western Australia, and in 1953 at Emu Field north of Maralinga.

The British had requested and were granted a huge chunk of South Australia to create a “permanent” atomic weapons test site, after finding the conditions at Monte Bello and Emu Field too remote and unworkable. Australia's then prime minister, Robert Menzies, was all too happy to oblige. Back in September 1950 in a phone call with his British counterpart, Clement Attlee, he had said yes to nuclear testing without even referring the issue to his cabinet.

Menzies was not entirely blinded by his well-known anglophilia; he also saw advantages for Australia in granting Britain's request. He was seeking assurances of security in a post-Hiroshima, nuclear-armed world and he believed that working with the UK would provide guarantees of at least British protection, and probably US protection as well.

He was also exploring ways to power civilian Australia with atomic energy and – whisper it – even to buy an atomic bomb with an Australian flag on it. While Australia had not been involved in developing either atomic weaponry or nuclear energy, she wanted in now. Menzies' ambitions were such that he authorised offering more to the British than they requested.

While Australia was preparing to sign the Maralinga agreement, the supply minister, Howard Beale, wrote in a top-secret 1954 cabinet document: "Although [the] UK had intimated that she was prepared to meet the full costs, Australia proposed that the principles of apportioning the expenses of the trial should be agreed whereby the cost of Australian personnel engaged on the preparation of the site, and of materials and equipment which could be recovered after the tests, should fall to Australia's account."

Beale said that he did not want Australia to be a mere "hewer of wood and drawer of water" for the British, but a respected partner of high (though maybe not equal) standing with access to the knowledge generated from the atomic tests.

That hope was forlorn and unrealised. Australia duly hewed the wood and drew the water at Maralinga, and stood by while Britain's nuclear and military elite trashed a swathe of Australia's landscape and then, in the mid-1960s, promptly left. Britain carried out a total of 12 major weapons tests in Australia: three at Monte Bello, two at Emu Field and seven at Maralinga. The British also conducted hundreds of so-called "minor trials", including the highly damaging Vixen B radiological experiments, which scattered long-lived plutonium over a large area at Maralinga.

The British carried out two clean-up operations – Operation Hercules in 1964 and Operation Brumby in 1967 – both of which made the contamination problems worse.



Whistleblower Avon Hudson at Maralinga.
Photo by Jessie Boylan.

Legacy of damage

The damage done to Indigenous people in the vicinity of all three test sites is immeasurable and included displacement, injury and death. Service personnel from several countries, but particularly Britain and Australia, also suffered – not least because of their continuing fight for the slightest recognition of the dangers they faced. Many of the injuries and deaths allegedly caused by the British tests have not been formally linked to the operation, a source of ongoing distress for those involved.

The cost of the clean-up exceeded A\$100 million in the late 1990s. Britain paid less than half, and only after protracted pressure and negotiations.

Decades later, we still don't know the full extent of the effects suffered by service personnel and local communities. Despite years of legal wrangling, those communities' suffering has never been properly recognised or compensated.

Why did Australia allow it to happen? The answer is that Britain asserted its nuclear colonialism just as an anglophile prime minister took power in Australia, and after the United States made nuclear weapons research collaboration with other nations illegal, barring further joint weapons development with the UK.

Menzies' political agenda emphasised national security and tapped into Cold War fears. While acting in what he thought were Australia's interests (as well as allegiance to the mother country), he displayed a reckless disregard for the risks of letting loose huge quantities of radioactive material without adequate safeguards.

Six decades later, those atomic weapons tests still cast their shadow across Australia's landscape. They stand as testament to the dangers of government decisions made without close scrutiny, and as a reminder – at a time when leaders are once again preoccupied with international security – not to let it happen again.

Liz Tynan, 26 Sept 2016, 'Sixty years on, the Maralinga bomb tests remind us not to put security over safety', The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/sixty-years-on-the-maralinga-bomb-tests-remind-us-not-to-put-security-over-safety-62441>

A 50-minute ABC interview with Liz Tynan is posted at: www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2016/08/09/4515140.htm

The role of civil resistance in mass movements

This is an Uprising

Mark and Paul Engler

2016

Nation Books

\$A40 from major booksellers

Review by Joel Dignam

Does strategic community organising create and lead sweeping social change? Or does social change momentum arrive from disruptive actions and sweep individuals and organisations along with it? This is the question tackled by US labour, civil rights and immigration rights activist brothers Paul and Mark Engler's *This is an Uprising*; the answer, of course, is 'both'.

This is an Uprising is an analysis of social change, how it has occurred, and how contemporary campaigners may make it occur again. It is being widely read and discussed among Australian climate activists. Using various 20th century case studies, including Martin Luther King's civil rights campaign in Birmingham, the overthrow of Milosevic in Serbia, the marriage equality campaign, the Arab Spring and climate activism, the authors contrast different approaches to social change and identify the critical role of nonviolent civil resistance. In doing so they aim to draw out lessons and ideas that might be generalised and applied by contemporary campaigners.

One of the Englers' key focuses is the putative tension between organising and mobilising. They examine this tension by contrasting two seminal thinkers. One, Saul Alinsky, championed "the slow, incremental building of community groups", through relationships, leadership, and structures. The other, Frances Fox Piven, argued in favour of "unruly broad-based disobedience, undertaken outside the confines of any formal organization", with the view that mass protest could rapidly draw in and mobilise previously disengaged citizens. The Englers own view is that both are necessary: "The future of social change in this country may well involve integrating these approaches - figuring out how the strengths of both structure and mass protest can be used in tandem - so that outbreaks of widespread revolt complement long-term organizing."

This is an Uprising does justice to this sentiment. It provides a reasonable assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and an analysis of how and when they can be used most effectively. Frustratingly, however, the authors seem transparently inclined towards the latter approach, despite their stated preference for an 'integrated approach'. Further, they come across as claiming that an integrated approach is something novel that they have developed, despite the emphasis accorded to mobilisation by other modern organisers such as Marshall Ganz whose work on the Obama campaign pioneered the integration of relational organising with electoral mobilising. But whether or not we agree with the authors, or like their style of argument, the discussion is educational and provides many useful object lessons to help develop our own ideas, for example the relationship between transactional smaller gains and transformational, revolutionary change.

This is an Uprising has great value in its detailed discussion of civil resistance and strategy for change. By "civil resistance", the authors broadly mean the use of nonviolent direct action in the creation of a mass uprising: they give examples of the Civil Rights Movement with its street marches and lunch-counter sit-ins, as well as Gandhi's salt march. In this sense the idea of "civil resistance" is inclusive of the sorts of direct action we have seen in Australia such as strikes, the Green Bans, and blockades of forest clearing or coal mining and export. However, civil resistance as the Englers describe it implies a shift away from action intended to prevent, say, a forest being cleared, and towards more symbolic actions primarily intended to grow majority public support.

Building upon this, the Englers illuminate the role of civil resistance in past social movement successes. They link it with the concept of Moyer's 'Movement Action Plan', and explain how civil resistance can feed into longer-term power-building. They identify three particular elements that occur "time and again" in effective uprisings: disruption, sacrifice, and escalation. As we consider questions of social movement strategy, the discourse on civil resistance prompts us to reflect and question ideas about the role of civil resistance in creating change.

The enthusiasm for this book amongst Australian climate activists comes as no surprise. Since the collapse of the Copenhagen climate talks in 2009, there has been a growing recognition of the need both to win more public support and to build a lasting power base to push for action on global warming. Complementing this, there has been an increased intensity of civil resistance, from the iconic and enduring Maules Creek blockade, to the recent mass action at the Newcastle coal port, 'Breakfree'. Wins, such as the success of the Bentley blockade, provide an indication of what works. Yet with a newly returned Coalition Government ready to keep propping up the coal industry, there is a hunger to foster the mass participation necessary to stand up to both the Government and the coal industry.

And *This is an Uprising* offers a tantalising glimpse of how civil resistance can be used to achieve just that. It offers us a model for thinking about social change. The point of a model isn't to be true, but to be useful. The book isn't a gospel, nor are the authors entirely objective (nor am I, this reviewer). Regardless, the book is a highly useful tool for social change activists. At a time when Australian civil society is confronting seemingly intractable social problems, *This is an Uprising* not only identifies possible ways forward, but offers useful context and guidance for how this way might be navigated.

Joel Dignam is a Canberra-based organiser with experience in electoral politics, the climate movement, and the union movement. He blogs at www.movementsatthestation.net.au/

Reprinted from SEARCH Foundation Discussion Bulletin, No. 25, September 2016, www.search.org.au

Germany's renewable energy transition

Energy Democracy: Germany's energiewende to renewables

Craig Morris and Arne Jungjohann

August 2016

Palgrave Macmillan

<http://energiewendebook.de/buy>

<https://www.palgrave.com/de/book/9783319318905>

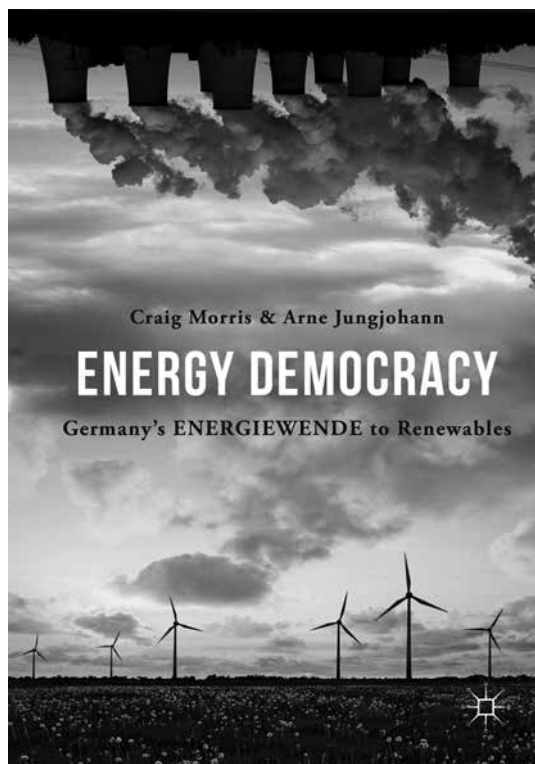
<https://books.google.com.au/books?id=6jsEDQAAQBAJ>

The fossil fuel and nuclear industries – and their supporters – go to extraordinary lengths to undermine Germany's transition to renewable energy. Craig Morris neatly sorts fact from fiction regarding Germany's *energiewende* (energy transition) in a recent article. In 2002 (and again in 2011), Germany adopted a plan to phase out nuclear by around 2022. Sceptics thought it would be impossible to offset nuclear power with renewables in such a short time – but in fact, Germany hit that target in 2015, seven years early. Critics of Germany's *energiewende* point to a “large increase” in coal – but in fact, fossil fuel consumption in the power sector reached a 35-year low in 2014, even with rising exports.

Morris and other experts regularly publish information and myth-busting and much of this information is freely available. See for example <http://energytransition.de>, <http://energytransition.de/blog>, and <http://arnejungjohann.de/en>

And while it isn't free, a new book by Morris (an American living in Freiburg, Germany's solar capital near the French border) and Arne Jungjohann (a German who lived in Washington DC until 2013), is an important addition to the literature.

Energy Democracy: Germany's energiewende to renewables traces the origins of the *energiewende* movement from protests against the industrialisation of rural communities in the 1970s to the Power Rebels of Schönau and German Chancellor Angela Merkel's shutdown of eight nuclear power plants following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.



The authors explore how community groups became key actors in the bottom-up fight against climate change. Individually, citizens might install solar panels on their roofs, but citizen groups can do much more: community wind farms, local heat supply, walkable cities and more. *Energy Democracy* offers evidence that the transition to renewables is a one-time opportunity to strengthen communities and democratize the energy sector – in Germany and around the world.

Arne Jungjohann writes: “Following the nuclear phase-out in 2011, the *Energiewende* drew a lot of attention around the world: either for being a panic reaction to the nuclear accident in Fukushima or for being allegedly exceptional with its rapid move to wind and solar. We both were struck by these awkward interpretations. The *Energiewende*, with its roots in the 1970s and 1980s, is the opposite of panicking. Yet, Germany and its energy transition is not exceptional; other countries are actually faster transitioning to renewables. But the *Energiewende* is nonetheless exceptional in one way too often overlooked: Germany is (apart from Denmark and maybe Scotland) the only country in the world where the switch to renewables is a switch to energy democracy. Once we realized how this uniqueness was being overlooked, we wanted to get the word out. So back in September 2014, we decided to write a book: a history of Germany's energy transition – its *Energiewende*.”

The book comes with an accompanying website – <http://energiewendebook.de> – where you can order the book or just individual chapters, read chapter summaries, and find useful graphics and videos.

Nuclear power's waste legacy

The Legacy of Nuclear Power
By Andrew Blowers
2017

Routledge

www.routledge.com/The-Legacy-of-Nuclear-Power/Blowers/p/book/9780415869997

In his new book, *The Legacy of Nuclear Power*, Andrew Blowers OBE, Emeritus Professor of Social Sciences at the Open University, brings to life what nuclear power's waste legacy means for our future and why.

The places studied in this book are Hanford (USA) where the plutonium for the first atomic bombs was made; Sellafield, where the UK's nuclear legacy is concentrated and controversial; La Hague, the heart of the French nuclear industry; and Gorleben, the focal point of nuclear resistance in Germany.

The case studies are considered through a theoretical framework focused on the concept of 'peripheral communities'. The places covered in this book are all, in their different ways, nuclear oases, peripheral places with distinctive identities.

Gordon MacKerron, Former Chair of the UK Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, writes: "Andy Blowers knows the communities around nuclear sites, across many countries, better than anyone. His book is utterly compelling, beautifully written and explains how a variety of consecutive discourses have influenced the evolution of these 'peripheral' communities, giving them the ambiguous status of being both marginal and dependent, but also endowed with political influence."

Over a long career Blowers has been involved in the field of environmental politics and policy making as an academic, politician, government adviser, nuclear company director and prominent environmental activist. As a member of the UK's Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, he was involved in policy development regarding nuclear waste.

In a short article that previews the book, Blowers writes:

"These four places, Hanford, Sellafield, La Hague/Bure and Gorleben with their different histories exemplify and explain the physical imprint and social conditions that are the continuing legacy of nuclear power. They constitute what may be defined as *peripheral communities*, places where hazardous activities are located and which are, as it were, physically and socially set apart from the mainstream.

"They tend to be geographically remote. They may be located at the edge whether of a country, as at La Hague, in relatively inaccessible sub-regions as at Sellafield or in areas of sparse population as Hanford was before the war



THE LEGACY OF
NUCLEAR POWER

ANDREW BLOWERS



and as Bure is today. They may be areas with a distinctive (real or invented) cultural identity or isolation like Gorleben, in the self-declared Wendland once on the border with Eastern Germany. Peripheral communities tend also to be economically marginal, monocultural and dependent on government investment and subsidy or state owned companies.

"Peripheral communities tend also to be politically powerless. Although nuclear industries tend to have a dominant position in their dependent communities, strategic decisions are taken elsewhere by governmental and corporate institutions. Key political decisions affecting peripheral communities are vested in national governments to which local governments, even in federal systems like the USA and Germany, are subordinated in terms of nuclear decision making.

"These nuclear peripheral communities also express distinctive cultural characteristics. Although it is difficult to pin down the complex, ambiguous and sometimes contradictory values and attitudes encountered in these places, there does seem to be a particular 'nuclear culture', that is both defensive and aggressive. This may be summarised in three distinguishing and complementary cultural features - realism, resignation and pragmatism - which combine to convey a resilience that provides the flexibility and resolution necessary for cultural survival.

"Nuclear communities fulfil a fundamental social role in that they take on (or more usually have to accept) the radioactive legacy of nuclear power. They bear the burden of cost, risk and effort necessary to manage the legacy on behalf of the wider society, a responsibility extending into the far future. This social role enables places like Sellafield, La Hague and Hanford to exercise some economic and political leverage.

"Economically they are relatively secure for, once production ceases, there remain decades of clean up activity often sustaining a large workforce with continuing and open ended commitment from the state. Politically they are able, with varying success, to gain compensation, investment and diversification. By contrast, there are those communities which have mobilised resources of power sufficient to prevent or halt the progress of nuclear power. The story of the Gorleben movement provides a compelling example of the power of resistance."

The full article is posted at: www.routledge.com/posts/10360

Jack Munday, Green Bans hero

*The House That Jack Built:
Jack Munday, Green Bans hero*
James Colman

September 2016

NewSouth Books

A\$49.99

www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/house-jack-built/

This is the story of how an ordinary bloke from the bush became the key figure in a movement that would change the shape of our cities and bring about lasting political and legal reform. This is the story of the house that Jack Munday built.

Without the green bans movement of the 1970s, Sydney and many other cities would look very different. Pulling together an unlikely alliance of environmentalists and union players earned Jack Munday a reputation as both the 'best-known unionist and best-known conservationist in Australia'.

Under his leadership, the movement fought against the slash-and-burn philosophy that almost saw The Rocks fitted out with high-rise buildings, a highway through the centre of Glebe and total development of Centennial Park. In this book James Colman reflects on Jack's remarkable life and his ongoing legacy. Munday overturned the bulldozer mentality of the 1960s and 1970s and helped to persuade Australians everywhere to cherish and protect the heritage of special buildings, places and sites.

More information is posted at <http://housejackbuilt.com.au>



40 Years of the Racial Discrimination Act

*I'm Not Racist But ... 40 Years of the
Racial Discrimination Act*

Tim Soutphommasane

With contributions by Maxine Beneba
Clarke, Bindi Cole Chocka,
Benjamin Law, Alice Pung and
Christos Tsiolkas.

NewSouth Books

June 2015

\$A29.99

[www.newsouthbooks.com.au/
books/40-years-racial-discrimination-
act/](http://www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/40-years-racial-discrimination-act/)

Race continues to be a lightning rod of public debate. Australia may be relaxed and comfortable about many things, but it remains unsettled about matters of race and culture. The Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) is Australia's first federal human rights legislation. A landmark law, the RDA has had a profound impact on race relations. Published last year to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the RDA, this book provides a considered, accessible reflection on Australian racism, the limits of free speech, the moral and philosophical dimensions of bigotry, and the role of the RDA in our society's response to discrimination. Tim Soutphommasane, since 2013 the Race Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission, and other contributors reflect on the national experience of racism and the progress that has been made since the introduction of the RDA.

Bush Heritage Australia

*Bush Heritage Australia: Restoring
Nature Step by Step* Sarah Martin

September 2016

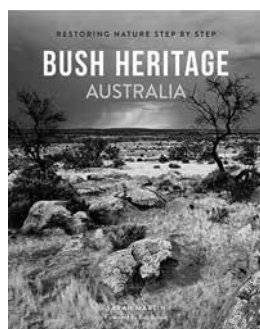
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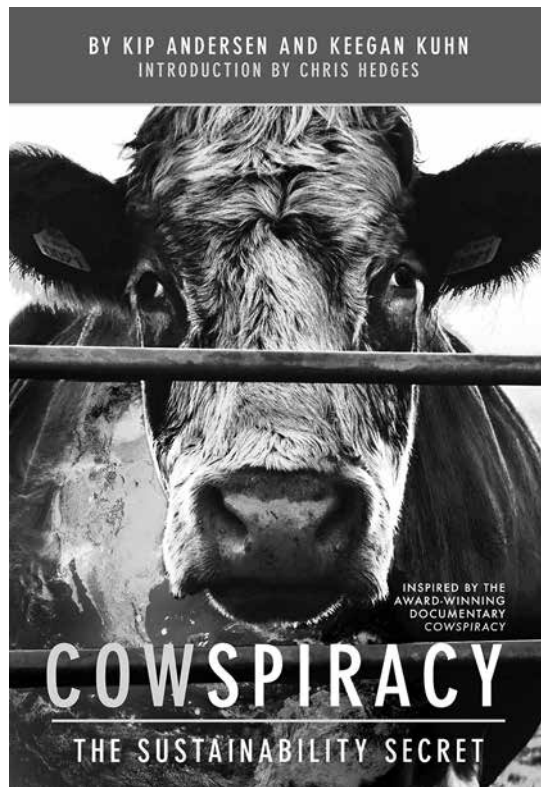
www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/bush-heritage/

With a plan to own or manage 1% of Australia by 2025, Bush Heritage Australia is an organisation with big ambitions. Started by Bob Brown in 1991, Bush Heritage was born from an urgent mission: to protect pristine land from logging. After buying two blocks of land in Tasmania's Liffey Valley, Brown built a philanthropic organisation to help pay for them. As donations flowed in and the organisation grew, Bush Heritage set its sights on acquiring tracts of land across the country, repairing environmental degradation and bringing native plants and wildlife back to health.

Twenty-five years later, with more than one million hectares in its care, Bush Heritage's achievements are celebrated in this book along with its growth from humble beginnings into a large non-profit with benefactors all over the world. Central to this story are the ecologists, researchers, land managers, local Indigenous groups, staff, donors and a brigade of volunteers who have helped the organisation to thrive.

Bob Brown writes: "For the ever-growing band of benefactors, and the volunteers and staff of Bush Heritage Australia, happiness flows from our combined effort to ensure that Australia's unique landscapes, wildlife and ecosystems prosper into the future."





Cowspiracy

Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret
Keegan Kuhn and Kip Andersen

Oct 2016

Titan Publishing Group | Insight Editions

9781608878437

www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/cowspiracy

Review by Jim Green

The award-winning documentary *Cowspiracy* presents alarming truths about the effects of animal agriculture on the planet. One of the leading causes of deforestation, greenhouse gas production, water use, species extinction, ocean dead-zones, and a host of other ills, animal agriculture is a major threat to the future of all species. This book expands upon the documentary. Authors Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn reveal one shocking statistic after another and interview leading businesses, environmental organisations, and political groups about the subject of animal agriculture and its disastrous effects.

The documentary can be downloaded or ordered from the website: www.cowspiracy.com

The website promotes *Cowspiracy* as “the film that environmental organizations don’t want you to see” and the promotional material for the book says that the effects of animal agriculture on the planet are “one of the environmental industry’s best-kept secrets”. (Likewise, Australian conspiracy theorist Geoff Russell claims that the “livestock industry is a major source of funding” for Friends of the Earth “so it isn’t surprising that they give Australia’s greatest source of climate warming (the meat industry) a free ride.” Suffice it to say that Friends of the Earth doesn’t get any funding from the livestock industry and has a decades-long history of promoting sustainable, meat-free diets.)

Perhaps *Cowspiracy* creators Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn generate more media with their sharp, sweeping attacks on the environmental movement but they ought to be aware of different positions within the movement. Moreover the accuracy of *Cowspiracy* has been challenged. Danny Chivers writes in *New Internationalist*:

“The film has built a sizable and vocal following, as evidenced by the critical Cowspiracy-inspired comments that frequently pop up on articles about climate change, bemoaning the lack of coverage of the climate impact of animal agriculture. In Paris for the [UN] climate talks in December [2015], there was no escape either. I spotted the headline statistic from the documentary – ‘animal agriculture is responsible for 51 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions’ – emblazoned on at least one placard or banner at most of the protests I attended in Paris. Kip Andersen himself even turned up at the anti-oil protest outside the Louvre, with a film camera and the 51 per cent figure printed on his shirt, presumably to denounce such fossil-fuel-bashing antics as a waste of time compared to stopping the livestock industry.

“There’s only one problem with this eye-grabbing stat: it’s a load of manure. Emissions from livestock agriculture – including the methane from animals’ digestive systems, deforestation, land use change and energy use – make up around 15 per cent of global emissions, not 51 per cent. I’ve been vegan for 14 years and have been asked to justify my dietary weirdness at more friend and family meals than I can count, so believe me – I’ve looked into it. If meat and dairy really were the biggest cause of global climate change I’d be trumpeting that statistic myself every chance I got.

“But I don’t. Because it’s not true. The 51 per cent number comes from a single non-peer-reviewed report by two researchers – a report littered with statistical errors. This study counts the climate impact of methane from animals as being more than three times more powerful as methane from other sources, adds in an inappropriate chunk of extra land use emissions, and incorrectly includes all the carbon dioxide that livestock breathe out. Setting aside this deeply flawed paper and looking instead at more reliable studies, we find that livestock’s real climate impacts – methane, land use change, energy use – make up just under 15 per cent of the global total.

“The thing is, 15 per cent is still a huge amount, more than all of the world’s cars, ships, trains and planes put together. Environmental campaigners – including large NGOs – certainly should be doing more to tackle it. Which is why the 51 per cent fake statistic is so painfully groan-inducing. It undermines an important argument and makes otherwise well-meaning people look foolish when they use it. It’s perfectly possible to make a powerful environmental case against the meat and dairy industry without using made-up numbers.”

Danny Chivers, 10 Feb 2016, ‘Cowspiracy: stampeding in the wrong direction?’, <https://newint.org/blog/2016/02/10/cowspiracy-stampeding-in-the-wrong-direction/>

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Other states – see Local Group contacts.

Affiliate members

ClimActs

(theatre troupe communicating the dangers of inaction on climate change) <http://climacts.org.au>

CounterAct

CounterAct supports communities with training for effective, creative, civil disobedience, nonviolent action, capacity building and campaigning skills.
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GM Free Australia Alliance

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Food Irradiation Watch

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Goongerah Environment Centre

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ph 0414 199 645 or (03) 51540109

Healthy Futures

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email: admin@healthyfutures.net.au
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Healthy-Futures/766271273470225

The Hub Foundation, Castlemaine

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In Our Nature

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Market Forces

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Mukwano Australia

Supporting health care in organic farming communities in Uganda. www.mukwano-australia.org
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Public Transport Not Traffic

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Sustainable Energy Now (WA)

Perth. PO Box 341, West Perth WA 6872.
www.sen.asn.au, contact@sen.asn.au,
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Tulele Peisa (PNG) 'Sailing the waves on our own',
www.tulele-peisa.org

West Mallee Protection (SA)

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National campaigns, projects and spokespeople

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LOCAL GROUPS

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facebook: facebook.com/foe.adelaide,
facebook.com/fairfoodadelaidesa,
facebook.com/Clean-Futures-Collective,
facebook.com/groups/
MarchAgainstMonsantoAdelaide

Bridgetown Greenbushes Friends of the Forest

address: PO Box 461, Bridgetown, WA, 6255
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Peace, anti-nuclear and clean energy (PACE) campaign:

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twitter: @PACECollective

Six Degrees Coal and Climate Campaign

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website: www.sixdegrees.org.au
phone, fax, street and postal addresses – shared with FoE Brisbane (see above).

Pacific & Torres Strait Islands Solidarity

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FoE Hobart / The Activist Centre

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FoE Melbourne

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Anti-nuclear & Clean Energy (ACE) Collective

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Dirt Radio:

www.3cr.org.au/dirtadio Mondays
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Economic Justice Collective:

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