

CHAIN REACTION

THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE OF FRIENDS OF THE EARTH AUSTRALIA :: WWW.FOE.ORG.AU

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THE CALIFORNIAN EXPERIENCE: *lessons for Australia on climate action*

NANOTECHNOLOGY - DON'T
BELIEVE THE GREEN HYPE

CREAKING NATIVE TITLE SYSTEM

STRZELECKI FOREST SELL OUT

'LOW-LIFE FERALS' STOP
ADELAIDE ARMS BAZAAR

CARBON OFFSETS: OFFSETTING
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Below: On 1st November 2008, 40 people took part in an
action that closed down Bayswater coal-fire powered station
in NSW. Bayswater is one of the largest power stations in
Australia. Three members of Rising Tide locked onto the
main coal conveyor belts shutting down the plant for over
4 hours. Meanwhile 25 activists breached the fence and
climbed onto the coal piles. This was one of four power
station shut downs between 1-6 November which included
Collie power-station, Western Australia; Tarong power
station, Queensland; and Hazelwood power station, Victoria.

More info at: www.risingtide.org.au
Photo: *Conor Ashleigh*, www.conorashleigh.com

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Chain Reaction is produced in Melbourne and
Newcastle. We acknowledge the traditional
owners of these lands and the fact that
Indigenous land has never been ceded.



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advice on themes for future editions, as well as helping to ensure that a
broader range of sectors/ constituencies are represented in the articles.
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design and so any problems, omissions or other failures are ours!



EARTH NEWS

Yolngu Sea Rights Recognised in High Court Decision

A decision 50 years in the making has confirmed what Yolngu people have always known – that their estate extends into tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land. The High Court decision acknowledges that traditional owners of the Blue Mud Bay region in north-east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory have exclusive rights regarding commercial and recreational fishing in tidal waters overlaying Aboriginal land. This decision means that Yolngu people must be included in any discussion and agreements about fishing, or any other business, on Aboriginal lands to the low water mark. It applies to the intertidal zone of over 80% of the Northern Territory coastline, and also to tidal rivers overlying Aboriginal land. Yolngu people have been raising this issue in the courts since the Croker Island case was lodged in 1994.

Simpson Desert Last of Land Claim Hearings in the Centre

The era of winning Aboriginal land back under the Land Rights Act is coming to a close in Central Australia. The hearing of a land claim expected to be the last in the Central Council region is nearing completion. The Simpson Desert land Claim Stage IV is over about 18,000 sq kms of land, some of which was previously subject to claim during the Simpson Desert Land Claim II. The opening evidence was heard before Aboriginal land Commissioner Howard Olney in the Claim area just south of Atula station on the northern edge of the Simpson Desert in late June,

where Traditional owners from the area presented Commissioner Olney with evidence of their links to the land.

Traditional Owners Continue Struggle Against Xstrata

Traditional Owners in the Borroloola region on the Queensland – Northern Territory border have filed an appeal against the recent Federal Court decision which allowed mining company Xstrata to divert the McArthur River and expands its mining operation. Ten Traditional Owners from the Borroloola region travelled to Sydney for the

hearing on August 18 and 19. This follows a stand-off between Traditional Owners from Borroloola and mine security, Borroloola police and the Northern Territory's Tactical Response Group at the entrance of the McArthur River mine, one of the world's richest zinc deposits. Traditional owners were denied access to a sacred site inside the mine boundary, and prevented from performing a ceremony. Under the Aboriginal Sacred Sites ACT (NT), Aboriginal people are provided with a statutory right to access sacred sites in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. Northern Land Council chairman Wali Wunungmurra said Traditional Owners are deeply upset about the diversion of the river and its effect on their



The Melbourne Veg Food Guide explores the very best of meat-free dining in Melbourne and regional Victoria. Including over 80 easy-to-read reviews of vegetarian, vegan and vegan-friendly restaurants, this guide will help you to seek out good food no matter where you are. From the bustling inner city streets of Collingwood to the serenity of the foothills in Belgrave, The Melbourne Veg Food Guide covers it all. A must for all Victorian food-lovers and interstate visitors.

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Traditional Owners

Continue Struggle Against Xstrata

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Source: Land Right News, Volume 11, Number 2, September 2008.

Australia's Bioenergy sector creates roadmap

In September, Australia's bioenergy industry released an Australian Bioenergy Roadmap which maps out a strategy to achieve: a growing, sustainable Australian bioenergy industry; increased community awareness and acceptance of bioenergy; a consistent national policy to support the industry's development; and long-term investor certainty.

An Oxfam report released in June argues that biofuel policies are not

solving the climate or fuel crises but are instead contributing to food insecurity and inflation, hitting poor people hardest. Oxfam calculates that rich country biofuel policies have dragged more than 30 million people into poverty, based on evidence that biofuels have contributed up to 30% to the global rise in food prices.

More information:

* Australian Bioenergy Roadmap, <www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/bioenergy>.

* Oxfam, 'How biofuel policies are deepening poverty and accelerating climate change', <www.oxfam.org.au/world/emergencies/global-food-crisis/another-inconvenient-truth.html>.

Clean Energy Council CEO Announced

Australia's Clean Energy Council appointed Matthew Warren as its CEO in October. For the past two years, Warren was the environment reporter with *The Australian*, where he produced some reflective analysis and some right-wing tabloid twaddle. Before that, he was director of external affairs at the NSW Minerals Council, in which capacity he was involved in handing out sham environmental awards to coal mining companies and attacking real environmentalists in the media.

Don Burke Joins Gunns

Celebrity gardener Don Burke has joined Gunns to promote the company's proposed pulp mill in Tasmania. The self-described "practical environmentalist" was until earlier this year head of the Australian Environment Foundation, a front group for the Institute of Public Affairs, which is itself a front group for corporate polluters ... more front than Myers! Gunns received an award from the Foundation in 2006 for grasslands management and protection of an endangered butterfly. Gunns has provided funding to the IPA.

Burke has refused a request to publicly debate the pros and cons of proposed pulp mill with retired celebrity gardener

Peter Cundall. "I don't think you ever get anywhere with a debate," Burke said. Cundall said: "The difference between Don and I is, I live here. I'm in the Tamar Valley. It is part of my environment. I'm also not being paid by anyone."

Connecting Renewables to the Grid

The Clean Energy Council has received funding from the federal government to work together with distribution businesses and retailers in Australia to develop a streamlined procedure for the connection of small-scale distributed generated systems to the grid. The project aims to streamline a connection procedure for all retailers; encourage the development of a consistent approach, pricing mechanisms and feed-in tariff for grid-connection; and to work in conjunction with retailers to resolve outstanding billing issues.

More information:
<www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/news/showarticle.php?id=156>

Smart Energy Policy Key to Billion Dollar Savings

Introducing an emissions trading scheme in Australia without complementary measures such as energy efficiency programs and renewable energy targets could cost the electricity sector more than \$40 billion, modelling commissioned by the Climate Institute has revealed.

More information:
<www.climateinstitute.org.au/images/reports/mmagr.pdf>

Damaging Fossil Fuel Projects Rejected in Queensland

In August, federal environment

minister Peter Garrett rejected a \$5 billion proposal for a coal port at Shoalwater Bay on Queensland's central coast of. The protection of Shoalwater Bay has been a long-term campaign by Friends of the Earth Brisbane in conjunction with the Shoalwater Wilderness Awareness Group. FoE Brisbane spokesperson Kim Stewart said: "This is a great decision for the environment and vindicates the many years of defending Shoalwater that we and the local community have engaged in. We now call on Mr Garrett to make sure that the polluting activities of the army in the region are also ended ..."

Also in August, the Queensland government rejected a shale oil proposal for Proserpine. Premier Anna Bligh said only one lease to mine oil shale existed, in Gladstone, and legislation would be passed so no new shale oil



mines were permitted anywhere in the state. "The Government will devote the next two years to researching whether oil shale deposits can be used in an environmentally acceptable way," she said. More than 92% of Australia's oil shale deposits are in Queensland.

Australia's Groundwater

Use Unacceptable

As river systems face drought and climate change, the increasing use of water from underground aquifers has become "an unacceptable risk", the National Water Commission said in its annual report, released in October. "Groundwater makes up approximately 17% of Australia's currently accessible water resources and accounts for over 30% of our total water consumption. However, it is neither understood nor managed as well as it needs to be if this valuable resource is to be sustained into the future," the report says.

More information: <www.nwc.gov.au>

Companies Warned on Carbon Capture

The International Energy Agency has warned that unless R&D expenditure on carbon capture and storage (CCS) accelerates rapidly, it might not be a commercial option until after 2030. Despite bold statements such as G8 leaders proposing to build 20 large-scale CCS demonstration projects by 2010, the IEA concludes "current spending and activity levels are nowhere near enough to achieve these deployment goals". CCS project costs have risen significantly in recent years. On current technology, the IEA report states, the cost of using CCS for a coal-fired plant is about US\$60-75 per tonne of emissions saved, making it far more costly than wind or nuclear power.

In another report, *Energy Technology Perspectives 2008*, the IEA urged the world to invest \$US30 trillion (\$A43.4 trillion) in a combination of CCS, renewable energy, nuclear power and energy efficiency.

A Greenpeace Australia report released in May concludes that CCS is largely unproven and will not be ready in time to save the climate. Greenpeace marked the publication of *False Hope*

by delivering a petition with 30,000 signatures to the Treasury calling for more spending on renewable energy.

Meanwhile, WWF-Australia's 2008 Power Generators Carbon Future Score Card assessed 19 of Australia's power firms on the work they are doing to reduce carbon emissions. Eleven were awarded two stars or less out of a possible five. The worst performers were Alcoa, the world's largest alumina producer; Intergen, a global power generation company; and mining company Rio Tinto. The survey judged the generators on whether they had invested in alternative power sources and whether they set greenhouse gas reduction targets. It also took into account whether they were investing in research for renewable energy and 'clean coal' demonstration plants.

More information:

* IEA, 'Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage: A Key Carbon Abatement Option', <www.iea.org/w/bookshop/add.aspx?id=335>.

* WWF, '2008 Power Generators Carbon Future Score Card', <www.wwf.org.au/news/aussie-power-generators-flunk-carbon-test>.

* Greenpeace, 'False Hope: Why carbon capture and storage won't save the climate', <www.greenpeace.org/australia/resources/reports/climate-change/false-hope-why-carbon-capture>

Food Authority Accused Over GM Decisions

A Greenpeace report says Food Standards Australia New Zealand is gambling with the health of consumers and is one of only a few regulators to have approved every application for genetically engineered food products. Over the past 12 years, the authority has approved more than 50 varieties of genetically engineered crops, from corn and soy to potato and sugar beet. The report notes that current labelling legislation is at odds with the ALP's national platform, which expresses support for comprehensive labelling of genetically modified food. Fifteen internationally-recognised scientists have sent an open letter to federal health minister Nicola Roxon protesting

over Australia's lax labelling laws for genetically engineered food.

Genetic engineering was a contentious aspect of an International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report released earlier this year. The report said that assessment of genetic engineering technology lags behind its development, that information is anecdotal and contradictory, uncertainty about possible benefits and damage is unavoidable, and data on some crops indicate highly variable yield gains in some places and declines in others. The report says the world produces enough food for everyone, yet more than 800 million people go hungry

More information:

* Greenpeace, 'Eating in the Dark', <www.greenpeace.org.au>.

* IAASTD report, <www.agassessment.org>.

Native Forests and Climate Sequestration

Scientists at the Australian National University conclude in a recent report that Australia has some of the most carbon-dense forests in the world, with the potential to sequester the equivalent of 25% of Australia's current annual emissions over a 100-year time frame.

More information: 'Green Carbon - The role of natural forests in carbon storage', <http://eprss.anu.edu.au/green_carbon_citation.html>.

Carbon Sink Forests Tax Rort Would Devastate Regional Communities

Liberal, Labor and National Party politicians have supported new tax breaks for plantations in a Senate inquiry report tabled in September. Greens Senator Christine Milne warned of a host of environmental and social consequences should the tax concession go ahead. "This extra tax break for polluters like coal generators and airlines would be bad for the environment and bad for regional

communities. Prime agricultural land will be replaced by plantations. People in rural and regional communities who have been devastated by ... plantations should be warning other communities across regional Australia ..."

Source: media release, Senator Christine Milne, 23 September 2008, <<http://christine-milne.greensmps.org.au>>.

National Atlas Highlights Renewable Energy Potential

Federal environment minister Peter Garrett launched an interactive atlas of Australia's renewable energy resources in October. Garrett said the atlas was a practical tool showing in-depth, nationwide information on all forms of renewable energy from solar exposure and wind speed to geothermal temperatures.

More information: The Renewable Energy Atlas, <www.environment.gov.au/renewable/atlas>.

Oxfam Report Details Costs of Arms Trade

Oxfam International has issued a new report which argues that arms sales prevent achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as many countries go heavily into debt to pay for weapons. "As well as prolonging and intensifying conflicts, the poorly regulated arms trade causes huge levels of waste, corruption and debt," the report states.

More information: Oxfam, 'Shooting Down the MDGs: How irresponsible arms transfers undermine development goals', <www.oxfam.org/en/policy/shooting-down-mdgs>.

Too Few Fish

A report released by Oceana finds that 58% of the world's fish stocks are being fished at or beyond sustainable levels,

24% of the stocks have an unknown status and only 17% are considered under-exploited or moderately exploited. The report highlights the need for limitations on global fisheries subsidies which are conservatively estimated at US\$20 billion annually, an amount equal to approximately 25% of the value of the world catch. Subsidies create strong economic incentives to overfish and undermine good fishery management.

More information: 'Oceana, Too Few Fish: A Regional Assessment of the World's Fisheries', <www.oceana.org>.

US Site Faces 'Catastrophic' Nuclear Leak

Cleaning up the notorious Hanford nuclear site in Washington State is already 19 years behind schedule and not due for completion until 2050. More than 210 million litres of radioactive and chemical waste are stored in 177 underground tanks. Most are over 50 years old. Already 67 of the tanks have failed, leaking almost four million litres of waste into the ground. A US Government Accountability Office report warns of "serious questions about the tanks' long-term viability." The report criticises the US Department of Energy for delaying an US\$8 billion program to empty the tanks and treat the waste.

Source: New Scientist, issue 2664, 9 July 2008.
More information: Government Accountability Office report, <www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-08-793>.

Looming Tropical Disaster Needs Urgent Action

A major review by University of Adelaide researchers shows that the world is losing the battle over tropical habitat loss with potentially disastrous implications for biodiversity and human well-being. Associate Professor Corey Bradshaw, from the University's School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, says tropical forests support more than 60% of all known species. But up to 15 million hectares of tropical rainforest are being lost every year and species are being lost at a rate of up to 10,000 times higher than would happen randomly without humans present.

More information: Tropic turmoil: a biodiversity tragedy in progress, <www.frontiersinecology.org>.

In September, a record number of people participated in the Rockhole Recovery project in South Australia. Hosted by the Kokatha Mula custodians, with the assistance of FoE affiliate group West Mallee Protection, the trip involved cleaning and maintaining rockholes and soaks in ancient mallee woodlands in the far west of the state. Sadly, this region has come under threat of mining and exploration - 16 exploration leases cover the land. For more info check out: <kokathamula.auspics.org.au>.





FOE AUSTRALIA NEWS

Friends of the Earth Australia is a federation of independent local groups. You can join FoE by contacting your local group. For further details, visit <www.foe.org.au>. There is a monthly email newsletter which includes details on our campaigns here and around the world. You can subscribe via the FoE website.

Protected Areas for Endangered Forest Species

FoE welcomes the announcement by Victorian environment minister Gavan Jennings of new protected areas for several endangered species in native forests, and calls on the Brumby Government to ensure forest protection for the future of all forest-dependent threatened species in Victoria.

Three of Australia's endangered species, the Long-footed Potoroo, the Leadbeaters possum and the Baw Baw frog have been given new 'protected areas' in Victoria's eastern forests. Existing protected areas will have about 10,000 hectares added, making a total of 75,000 hectares.

Unfortunately, analysis of the East Gippsland Potoroo reserve indicates that no new habitat area has been earmarked for protection. "In East Gippsland the 40,000 hectares is not new, but places existing protection zones and reserves under a Potoroo label," said Jill Redwood from Environment East Gippsland.

"It's a great start to see some new areas rezoned for the Baw Baw Frog and Leadbeaters possum but the endangered Spot-tailed Quoll, Gippsland's three large forest owls and our old growth are hopefully next in line for protection by the government," Redwood said.

Other endangered species' habitat is still being lost at a rapid rate as areas of old-growth forest continue to be cleared.

More information: <www.melbourne.foe.org.au>.

Nano-Food Labelling

FoE's Nanotechnology Project is working hard across many of the big issues posed by this tiny technology – new environment and health risks, new threats to public interest science, and new challenges for democracy. If you are interested in getting involved in our work or receiving regular email updates, please visit <www.nano.foe.org.au> or email <georgia.miller@foe.org.au>.

With nearly all the Fortune 500 companies and governments worldwide investing in nanotechnology, stopping dodgy products being rushed to market is hard work. No-one wants to eat nanofood, but Food Standards Australia refuses to label it. Earlier this year, FoE revealed that there are now over 100 food, food packaging, kitchen and agricultural products on sale internationally that contain nanoparticles.

New opinion polling of 1,010 people commissioned by the FoE Nanotechnology Project has found huge support for precautionary management of nanotechnology's use in food and food packaging and for labelling to enable informed choice. Ninety-two percent of Australians support mandatory labelling of food and food packaging ingredients that are produced using nanotechnology, while 96% support mandatory safety testing of all nanotechnology ingredients.

Only 15% of people said that they would purchase nanofoods, while 40% said they would not purchase them at all. The results of the opinion poll are posted at: <www.foe.org.au/resources/research-papers/nanotechnology>.

Please tell parliamentary secretary for health Senator Jan McLucas that you want new safety testing and labelling for all nanofoods, and for the public to have a role in decision making. Email <senator.mclucas@aph.gov.au>.

Government Fails to Act on Workplace Nano Exposure

FoE recently released a report that reviewed the mounting evidence that carbon nanotubes can pose asbestos-like health risks to workers. In order to avoid a repeat of the asbestos tragedy, we have backed calls from the world's second largest reinsurance company Swiss Re to apply the precautionary principle in the management of nanotechnology's health and environment risks, irrespective of costs.

We are therefore extremely disappointed with the recent federal government response to the 2005-2006 Senate Inquiry into Toxic Dust and Nanoparticles. The Senate Committee identified that there may be gaps in Australia's regulation of nanoparticles that leave workers exposed to unacceptable health risks. It recommended measures to close the gaps, yet the government response ignores all of these timely recommendations for practical action.

Please tell innovation minister Kim Carr that we cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of asbestos, and that no worker should face unsafe occupational



Katuulo organic farming community in Uganda, construction of a health centre which has since been completed. Photo by Kristen Lyons.

exposure to nanoparticles. Email <senator.carr@aph.gov.au>.

More information: <www.melbourne.foe.org.au>.

FoE Friends Working in Uganda

Kristen Lyons writes:

Mukwano Australia joined FoE Australia as an affiliate member in July. Mukwano works with organic farming communities in Africa to establish health care facilities. In doing so, Mukwano aims to support organic farmers, farm families and their communities to improve their long-term health prospects. The starting premise is that local communities themselves often have the most appropriate visions for health provisioning, and to provide economic, training, lobbying and

other support to assist communities to achieve these aspirations.

Our current project is with the Katuulo organic farming community in Uganda. Here we have recently completed a health care centre building, including installation of a water tank. We are currently working with an organic dried fruit export company to provide solar power for this building, and are working with Soft Power Health (Uganda) to develop and implement a malaria education program.

Meanwhile, FoE friend Simon Turner has recently established a small business in Uganda. Simon writes:

I went to Uganda two years ago, wanting to see for myself first-hand the problems of under-development and poverty in Africa, and what I could do personally to help remedy these problems. I have emerged having set up

a beekeeping business working directly with local farmers, empowering them to escape poverty as well as develop both an economically and environmentally sustainable industry. Training farmers with improved beekeeping techniques and the distribution of proper equipment, such as bee suits and smokers, has been a central focus.

Beekeeping has many benefits: not only is there a reliable market for honey, it is environmentally friendly and supports integrated crops with improved pollination. For a large percentage of the population which survives at a subsistence level, this means greater yields on their crops (such as bananas) and other commonly grown staples (such as maize and cassava). And the honey has great nutritional value for improving family diets.

More information: <www.malaikahoney.com>, <s.turner@malaikahoney.com>.

FoE Report on BPA Chemical in Consumer Goods

Australian regulators continue to downplay the harmful effects of a chemical called Bisphenol A (BPA), which is extensively used in plastic consumer products. According to a FoE Australia report released in September, 'Blissfully unaware of BPA', regulators need to act urgently to protect consumers. It shows that BPA, which is found in goods such as baby bottles, plastic microwave food containers and canned food linings, has proven links with a wide range of health disorders from infertility, breast and prostate cancer, to thyroid malfunction, attention deficit syndrome and recurrent miscarriage. A recently published US population study has also found that individuals with high urinary BPA content had increased heart disease, diabetes, and liver abnormalities. The report, and a consumer guide showing how to avoid this chemical, can be found at: <www.foe.org.au/chemicals>.

Indigenous Solidarity Gathering

FoE worked with the Latin American Solidarity Network and a range of other groups to hold an Indigenous solidarity Gathering in Melbourne in October. This focus was on Latin America, Asia and the Pacific. The gathering aimed to build bridges connecting our struggles, and strengthen solidarity, friendship and collaborations between indigenous and non-indigenous grassroots organisations throughout various regions of the world, especially where multinational corporations and military interventions severely impact on indigenous lands and communities. It was a great success. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to pull it together - in particular Marisol Salinas and Lucho Riquelme

Climate Change and Development Campaigning

FoE has been campaigning for years on the issue of human rights and climate change, and for some time was the only national group consistently operating from this perspective. Thankfully, more and more groups are now recognising the fact that climate change will affect everyone, but it will impact on poor people in 'developing' countries first and most dramatically.

This is reflected by the fact that one of the two campaign focuses for 2008 in the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign is on climate change. FoE is active in this campaign. Most aid and development groups now realise that climate change is a serious challenge to efforts to tackle poverty, and this marks a major shift for a number of groups who only two years ago were largely unprepared to respond to this issue.

More information: <www.makepovertyhistory.com.au/climatechange2008.aspx>..

Climate Action Centre

A new climate action centre will open its doors at the end of November in Melbourne. The centre, an initiative of Friends of the Earth and Carbon Equity, will be located in Victorian Trades Hall.

The independent open-access resource centre will focus on supporting and developing community climate action groups and community mobilisation. Some of the work and activities planned include monthly discussion forums on key climate questions and problems, resource workshops and training for climate groups and direct-action planning. The centre will also include meeting space for climate groups and hot desks with computer and web access for visiting activists. For more information or to receive updates, email <info@climateactioncentre.org>.

Ride Planet Earth

Kim Nguyen is riding from Brisbane to Copenhagen over a period of 18 months. He intends to arrive in time for the UN negotiations on climate change in December 2009. Along the way, he will collect signatures calling for comprehensive, fair, and immediate action on climate change. FoE is proud to be involved in this project. You can read about Kim's journey at: <<http://rideplanetearth.org>>.



Kim Nguyen from Ride Planet Earth, riding from Australia to Copenhagen in time for the UN negotiations on climate change



Sustainable Energy Now - WA

Sustainable Energy Now - WA

FoE Australia affiliate member Sustainable Energy Now (SEN) aims to change the perception that renewable energy cannot sustain energy needs in Western Australia, with particular focus on the state's main electricity grid, the South West Interconnected System (SWIS). For the past year, this has been achieved through the establishment of a website, presentations to schools, community groups and members of parliament, display stands at various events and writing letters to newspapers and politicians.

SEN is also developing an interactive simulation to demonstrate the ability of renewable energy to contribute to the SWIS. There are two phases to this project, known as ProjectSEN. Firstly, a JavaScript simulation has been created that allows the user to add renewable generating capacity to a map of WA and this translates to energy on a graph showing average daily load on the SWIS.

Calculations are made using solar irradiance, wind regime, geothermal mapping and wave regime maps, plus a component for transmission loss depending on the location of the generating infrastructure in relation to the SWIS. This simulation will display calculations of potential investment in renewable energy, investment in new transmission infrastructure, jobs created, unit price, and greenhouse emissions reduced.

The second phase of ProjectSEN is a more developed simulator that links to historical meteorological data so that the user can pick a day to see what cloud cover, wave and swell, or wind occurred and how that would have affected the electricity generated. The resulting graphs or charts will strengthen the message that renewable energy can fully meet our electricity needs, thus reducing reliance on fossil fuels and reducing carbon dioxide emissions and other pollutants.

While the 'Tech Team' is working on the interactive simulation, the Marketing Team is working to enhance the website. People interested in ProjectSEN are encouraged to get involved. Email <contact@sen.asn.au> for more information, to receive regular updates or to become a member. Phone and postal details are posted on the website <www.sen.asn.au>.

Friends of the Earth invites you to join the ACTIVE FRIENDS PROGRAM

What is the Active Friends Program?

The Active Friends Program is one of the best means to support the 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 will help maintain projects such as the Nuclear Freeways Project, protecting Red Gum forests and ensuring climate refugees are recognised and given aid to, to name just a few.

Why is the Active Friends Program vital to FoE?

Friends of the Earth never endorses people, parties or products and does not receive government or corporate sponsorship. To remain a radical and credible voice for social and environmental justice, we need a stable financial base. The Active Friends Program means that Friends of the Earth can engage in long-term campaign planning, and quickly and effectively respond to local issues.

How can you join the Active Friends Program?

To join the Active Friends Program, please fill in the 'Active Friends' section on the reverse side of this page and post to: Friends of the Earth, PO Box 222, Fitzroy, 3065. You can cancel this pledge at any time by contacting the FoE office. All Active Friends donations are fully tax deductible.

www.foe.org.au





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community · ecology · solidarity · justice

We are part of the Australian voice of the largest grassroots environment network in the world, with groups in 72 countries. Whether you decide to get a campaign up & running, volunteer at the fabulous food coop or bookshop, or provide crucial dollars as an Active Friends monthly supporter, it is people like you who keep Friends of the Earth strong. If you are short on time, but big on commitment, take a few minutes to fill in this form.

As a member of Friends of the Earth you are never alone

Help ensure FoE remains a vibrant & independent voice for social and environmental justice. Give your support by:

- Becoming an **Active Friend** by giving monthly tax-deductible donations
- Becoming a **Member**
- Giving a one-off **Donation**

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I'd like to make a **monthly donation** of: \$20 \$30 \$50 other \$_____ (\$10 min)

The donation will be by (please fillout appropriate card details below):

- Direct Debit** from my bank account (the least admin fees!) **Credit card**

A Service Agreement will be sent to you upon receipt of this form. If you would also like to become a member, tick here: an additional \$20 per year will go towards membership, this is not tax-deductible.

membership

Become a FoE member with a yearly membership payment: **New Member** **Renewal**

\$120 Supporting Member (\$60 tax deductible)

\$90 Organisation

\$60 Household

One Year

\$50 Waged Person

\$30 Low Income

Ongoing (Credit Card or Direct Debit only)

donations

Make a one-off donation (over \$2.00 is tax-deductible): Donation \$_____ (thank you!)

Direct debit

I/We _____

(Given name)

(Family name)

Request you, until further notice in writing, to debit my/our account described in the schedule below, any amounts which Friends of the Earth Inc may debit or charge me/us through our direct debit system. I/We understand that 1) the bank/financial institution may in its absolute discretion determine the order priority of payment by it of any moneys pursuant to this Request or any other authority or mandate. 2) The bank/financial institution may in its discretion at any time by notice in writing to me/us terminate this Request as to future debits. Bendigo Bank Direct Debit User ID no: 342785

Financial Institution: _____

BSB # _____

Branch address _____

Account # _____

Name on Account _____

Signature _____

Credit Card

Visa Mastercard Bankcard Name on card: _____

Card no: ____/____/____/____ Expiry Date: __/__/__

CCV no: ____ (last 3 digits on back of card) Cardholder's signature: _____

ABN 81600610421



FOE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Friends of the Earth International is a federation of autonomous organisations from all over the world. Our members, in 73 countries, campaign on the most urgent environmental and social issues, while working towards sustainable societies. <www.foei.org>

Support Colombian Indigenous Peoples

Colombian indigenous peoples have been subjected to blatant repression and gruesome attacks in recent months by the Colombian military. Police in Colombia have violently suppressed protests from indigenous groups by firing bullets and throwing tear gas at them. This is the response of the government and the military towards indigenous peoples who took to the streets to protect their rights and to defend their territory, autonomy and traditional cultures.

FoE Colombia and FoE International are calling on members and friends to send letters to the Colombian embassy in your respective countries to demand that the government takes action. A letter of support is posted on the FoEI website (in English and Spanish). Please go to <www.foei.org> and click on "Indigenous communities on fire".

Contact details for the Colombian Embassy in Australia: Level 2, 101 Northbourne Ave, Turner, ACT, 2612. Fax: 02 6257 1448.

Support Justice for Indigenous Communities in Guatemala

Antonio Morales, a municipal council member in western Guatemala, was

murdered on August 7, six weeks after the council became one of 26 to reject mining on their territory through a community referendum. The murder occurred the day before the International Day of Indigenous Peoples. To participate in urgent actions in support of communities resisting mining on their territories in the face of threats, and to demand that Canadian mining companies and the Guatemalan government work to stop the repression against anti-mining activists, visit: <www.nisgua.org>.

Women Resisters

The new FoE International project 'Women Resisters' has produced a 10-minute film in conjunction with LRC / FoE Philippines. The footage was shot at the December 2007 mining conference in the Philippines. The film is posted at: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCRolUc6xy4>.

Biofuels in Europe and Latin America

Members of the European Parliament voted on September 11 to scale back the EU's ambitious plans to expand the use of biofuels for transport following widespread social and environmental concern. The MPs cut the target by half to 5% of road transport by 2020.

FoE Europe's biofuels campaign, run with other European NGOs, has been short-listed for the 2008 Campaign of the Year award by the European Public Affairs Awards 2008. According to EPAA, the campaign has "done a tremendous job in drawing the attention to some of

the serious unintended consequences of biofuels and achieved a change of mindset from considering biofuels as the silver bullet to all problems, to understanding the limitations and dangers of biofuels." More information: <www.theparliament.com/index.php?id=703>.

FoE International's new report, 'Fuelling Destruction in Latin America', looks at current and proposed developments in a number of Southern and Central American countries, all of which are scaling up biofuel production at alarming rates to meet domestic and export demand to supply diesel and gasoline to Europe and the US. The report is posted at: <www.foei.org/en/publications>.

Nigeria: Environmentalists Denounce Arrests

FoE Nigeria condemned the September 2 arrest and detention of around 25 people attending a community forum on gas flaring in the Iwherekan community. The arrests were made by Nigerian soldiers at the gas flaring site, operated by oil giant Shell. The detainees, including journalists, FoE Nigeria members, community elders, women and children, were held for over five hours.

More information:

* <www.foei.org/en/publications/pdfs/gasnigeria.pdf>.

* A video about oil and gas abuse in Nigeria: <www.foei.org/en/who-we-are/testimonies/nigeria-poison-fire>.

* FoE Nigeria evidence to a US Senate Committee on oil development in Nigeria and the violent suppression of environmental protesters: <www.eraction.org> and <www.earthrights.org/content/view/561/114>.

IUCN / Shell Collaboration

FoE International teamed up with other NGOs at the International Union for Conservation of Nature Congress in Barcelona to present a motion against the agreement between IUCN and Shell. In October 2007, IUCN signed an agreement with Shell with the aim of enhancing the company's biodiversity conservation performance and strengthening IUCN's capacity to influence large corporations. The motion had the support of almost 60% of the total votes. But IUCN has a voting system that requires a majority from both NGOs and governments, and 75% of governments opposed the motion.

Although the motion was rejected, the NGO work succeeded in stirring up a huge debate about Shell's activities around the world and the company's efforts to greenwash its corporate identity.

More information:

* <www.foei.org/en/publications/pdfs/gasnigeria.pdf>.

* A video about oil and gas abuse in Nigeria: <www.foei.org/en/who-we-are/testimonies/nigeria-poison-fire>.

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FoE International and InterPress Service Collaboration

FoE International and the international news agency InterPress Service (IPS) have started a joint project on news reporting, opinion building and media training in the areas of climate change, biodiversity, food security and the extractive industries. IPS looks at these issues from the perspective of affected people. Have a look at the IPS coverage and sign up for a free, weekly newsletter at <www.ipsnews.net/environment.asp>.

Challenges to World Bank Climate Funds

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FoE Middle East: Time Magazine 'Environment Heroes 2008'

Congratulations to FoE Middle East, named 'Environment Heroes 2008' by *Time* magazine for their pioneering work teaching local leaders to reach out across conflict lines in the region. *Time* said "They understand the road to sustainability, like the road to peace, is going to be a slow, messy human project of community organising, education and trust-building."

More information: <www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1841778_1841781_1841807,00.html>.

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Togo: Bauxite Mining on Mount Agou Stopped

FoE Togo has been part of a successful campaign to prevent a Bahamas-based company, MM Mining, from extracting one million tonnes of bauxite from Mount Agou, the highest mountain in Togo. More information on YouTube – just type in 'Mount Agou' and 'Amis de la Terre'.

Uruguay: The Second Congress of the People

More than 570 civil society organisations and 1,600 people participated in the second Congress of the People, in Montevideo on September 5-6. REDES / FoE Uruguay was one of the organisers. This will now be a permanent coordination of the Uruguayan peoples' movement, generating a multitude of proposals that will allow us to design a democratic country founded on social justice.

More information: <www.redes.org.uy>.

Stop Didipio Mine in the Philippines

The people of Nueva Vizcaya are asking for support for their resistance against the Didipio gold-copper mining project in Nueva Vizcaya province, Philippines. Part of their campaign is to pressure the financial supporters of the Australian company OceanaGold (which owns the mining project) to withdraw their involvement in the project. The financial backers include ANZ and HSBC. Please visit <www.kalikasan.org/kalikasan-cms-new> where you can find the online petition.

Jillian Marsh, 2008 Nuclear-Free Future Award Recipient

Friends of the Earth anti-nuclear campaigners have been working with Jillian Marsh and other Adnyamathanha people for the past decade, initially in the unsuccessful struggle to prevent the development of the Beverley uranium mine and more recently in connection with a number of other proposed mines. Over the past few years, FoE Adelaide has organised a number of trips to Nepabunna to help the local Adnyamathanha people with a range of community projects. A few months ago, Jillian participated in the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance meeting in the NT and was elected onto the newly-formed Alliance Committee. We're delighted that Jillian, along with Manuel Pino from New Mexico, are the joint winners of the 2008 Nuclear Free Future Award – two indigenous activists, one from each hemisphere, united in their struggle to protect country and culture. Since 1998 the Award has honoured people working to make the world liveable for the coming generations. Here is the award citation for Jillian (abridged).



Jillian accepting the Nuclear-Free Future Award in Munich

Jillian Marsh grew up in the coal-mining town of Leigh Creek, in South Australia's Flinders Ranges. To Jillian and her clan the ranges are Adnyamathanha yarta, the country of the rock people. She remembers: "The coal itself, and where it's located, are central to our Muda, our Dreaming, yet nobody bothered to ask our Elders for permission to extract it. It was a fundamental blow to the continuity of our ceremonial and spiritual life."

Jillian said: "During the 1990s I joined a small group of my Adnyamathanha cousins, aunts and uncles who were part of a volunteer organisation called Flinders Ranges Aboriginal Heritage Consultative Committee. Together we provided a safe and respectful forum for all Adnyamathanha to raise concerns, particularly in regard to maintaining our heritage. Two of the biggest issues we faced during this period were coming to terms with the introduction of Native Title legislation, designed to right past wrongs, and facilitating meaningful community consultation on the exploration and mining proposal for Beverley Uranium Mine."

The partnership between government and the mining industry ensures that uranium exploration and mining continues undeterred by Indigenous or general public concerns in a section of Jillian's homeland her people call virdni yarta: poison country. In August 2002, Jillian told a Senate inquiry that mining company 'negotiations' with the Adnyamathanha were "misrepresentative, ill-informed, and designed to divide and disempower the community". Today, with the expansion of the uranium mining lease, Jillian, squaring off against the partnership of government and industry, points out that consultation and negotiation processes are "still ill-equipped to give a fair and equitable voice to the Adnyamathanha community."

In 2004, Jillian was successful in winning a Doctoral candidacy placement at Adelaide University's Geographical and Environmental Studies Department. Her PhD research topic, 'A Look at the Approval of Beverley Mine and the Ways that Decisions are Made When Mining Takes Place in Adnyamathanha Country: Better Ways of Caring for Culture', reads like a report from behind enemy lines. "I want our story to be told, the way we as Indigenous Australians experience the social and environmental impacts from uranium mining and the nuclear industry. Unless we tell it ourselves, we run the risk of being misrepresented or silenced." Jillian's thesis is due to be submitted shortly for assessment. She hopes to be able to continue her research in this area with assistance from the Australian Research Council in 2009.

Jillian shares her knowledge and skills with other Aboriginal clans across the Australian continent facing the same cultural and environmental devastation. She has also travelled overseas to attend First Nation conferences, observing "the same pattern of oppression is being used by mining companies and governments all over the world against Indigenous communities."

Jillian has helped build strong alliances with green environmental organisations under the umbrella of the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance. She says, "If my work inspired some of our young people, that would be great."

More information on the Nuclear Free Future Awards:
<www.nuclear-free.com/english/nffaward.htm>.

No Nukes News

Australian Nuclear Free Alliance

Formed in 1997, the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance brings together Aboriginal people and environmental and medical NGO's concerned about existing or proposed nuclear developments in Australia, particularly on Aboriginal homelands. At the 2008 meeting, a new structure has been created with the aim of significantly building the Alliance. A new committee has been formed to oversee the work of the Alliance over the next year. A number of Alliance working groups have also been formed - website, fundraising, newsletter, international outreach / solidarity, speaking tour, 2009 meeting organising group, media, water, and education. Contact Friends of the Earth if you can help one or more of the working groups, <jim.green@foe.org.au> 0417 318368. More information on the Alliance is posted at: <www.foe.org.au/anti-nuclear/issues/oz>.

Uranium Sales to Russia

FoE has worked successfully with other NGOs to persuade Kelvin Thomson and other Labor members of parliament's treaties committee that the 2007 Howard/Putin uranium agreement should not be ratified unless it is greatly strengthened. The Australian Safeguards and Non-proliferation Office claimed that safeguards would "ensure" that Australian uranium remained in peaceful use in Russia, but research by FoE revealed that there have been no International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards inspections in Russia since 2001 and there is no requirement in the

Howard/Putin uranium agreement for any inspections in future. Moreover, there is no provision in the agreement for independent, Australian inspection of facilities in Russia processing uranium mined here, so we are entirely reliant on IAEA inspections – which are non-existent!

FoE is asking people to write to foreign minister Stephen Smith asking him to accept the treaties committee's findings and to reject the Howard/Putin agreement. For more information, please visit: <www.foe.org.au/anti-nuclear>.

Ethical Investment, Uranium and Nuclear Power

Corporate Watch Australia has produced a report on ethical investment, uranium and nuclear power. Written by Frances Howe, the report finds that many so-called ethical investment funds in Australia invest in uranium mining, with the number rising significantly in recent years. The report is posted at: <www.foe.org.au/anti-nuclear/issues/oz/ethical>.

Getting out from the Nuclear Umbrella

Supporters and members of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and Japanese for Peace descended on Melbourne's Flinders Street station on October 10. With kangaroos, a Geisha, umbrellas and ICAN materials for the public, they called on Australia and Japan to get out from under the United States' nuclear weapons 'umbrella' and to get serious about nuclear disarmament.



An October 3 protest in Alice Springs against the NT government's decision to approve uranium exploration at Angela Pamela despite its proximity to the town's water supply.

Strzelecki Forest Sell Out

Anthony Amis

The decade long battle to get protection for the rainforests in one of the most depleted bioregions in Victoria, the Strzelecki Ranges, now appears to be over. The Victorian government and Hancock Victorian Plantations signed a deal in August which opens up key rainforest catchments to clear-felling, including sites of national conservation significance such as College Creek.

In 1998, Hancock purchased perpetual logging rights to a large portion of Victoria, including the Strzelecki Ranges. It was and still is Australia's largest ever forest sale – 170,000 hectares. In 2001, Hancock purchased the 80,000 hectare assets of Australian Paper Plantations, which significantly extended Hancock's influence in Gippsland. Gippsland has long been seen as a resource extraction zone by Australia's largest pulp mill, Maryvale. In 2001, Hancock signed hardwood contracts to supply Maryvale until the year 2027.

To call all of the forest areas purchased by Hancock 'plantation' is incorrect. Hancock did purchase rights to log radiata pine plantations and bluegum plantations, but their most controversial assets were the thousands of hectares of 30-year old Mountain Ash mislabeled as plantation and stands of native forest located in very close proximity to the Mountain Ash. A more accurate description of the Mountain Ash would be reforestation/regrowth as the ecological attributes of the forest were in most cases identical to native forests, including diverse native forest understorey.

In many locations, the reforestation surrounded areas of cool temperate rainforest including sites of regional, state and national significance. Some of these rainforest sites were in a process of recovery from disturbances wrought upon the region by farmers and later, the pulp and paper industry. Crucial to the long-term survival of these rainforests is the issue of rainforest buffers.

Almost all of the Strzelecki rainforests lie in creek gullies which are surrounded by native forest and reforestation. If the catchments containing these rainforests are logged, the rainforests are put at greater risk through disease, in particular Myrtle Wilt which infects wounded Beech trees. Opening up catchments also increases the risk of fire, which if it gets a hold of rainforest will incinerate it, to be regenerated by eucalypt forest, not rainforest.

Logging inside rainforest catchments also opens up the rainforest to invasion by weeds, and increased risk of tree fall into rainforest, further increasing risk of disease. Logging also alters the delicate balance of heat, moisture, wind and light. If exposed to more of these elements, rainforests and the rare plants within them can dry out and ultimately die.

In 2001, a biodiversity study was conducted by Biosis Research, which found that the most significant biodiversity assets of the Strzelecki Ranges were contained within an area stretching from Gunyah Gunyah to Tarra Bulga National Park. This 8,400 hectare area was then labeled as the Cores and Links rainforest reserve, as it contained almost all of the Strzelecki rainforest and its wet forest buffers, including 2,400 hectares of reforestation. The rainforest had largely been located though a seven-year volunteer mapping exercise by local school teacher Elaina Fraser and later Susie Zent from Friends of Gippsland Bush.

After years of pressure and lobbying, a Heads of Agreement was signed by numerous parties in October 2006. It was publicly announced by conservation minister John Thwaites. The \$7 million deal meant protection for several key rainforest catchments, with Hancock handing over logging rights in contentious areas such as College Creek.

Some logging was allowed in the protected area, as Hancock was still under licence commitments and claimed that they required 600,000 cubic metres of pulp logs from the area for Maryvale. Any shortfall not reached by logging selected areas within the Cores and Links would then be met by logging native forest. This probably would have meant logging of less than 100 hectares of native forest. However, shortly after the deal was signed, Hancock changed its story by doubling its supposed shortfall from 600,000 to 1.2 million cubic metres. A stalemate ensued.

Wilderness Society and Victorian National Parks Association

John Thwaites resigned as conservation minister in July 2007, leaving his position to be filled by Gavan Jennings. From then on, the Victorian government seemed to have little interest in defending the community's position. In April 2008, Friends of the Earth received a phone call from Gavan McFadzean from the Wilderness Society (TWS) saying that the Victorian government wanted to establish a new Strzelecki negotiating team as the existing scenario was locked in a stalemate.

TWS was asked by Friends of the Earth and Friends of Gippsland Bush to keep out of the negotiations because they had never campaigned in the region and had no history with the complex negotiations. Friends of the Earth also believed that the Victorian government was attempting to undermine our bargaining position by bringing in other players.



Above: Thirty year old reforestation/native forest logging by Hancock, Morwell River Catchment. Insert: June 29 2008: Rally at College Creek

On May 30, I was called into the minister's office to be told of a new deal. It basically meant a gutting of all of the key rainforest catchments, with Hancock handing over a trivial amount of reforestation whilst allowing for clear-felling of 1,500 hectares of the most sensitive areas which had been protected in the original deal. Areas of Hancock's custodial land, some 20,000 hectares of which was never going to be logged by the company, would then be put under some form of undisclosed protection. Hancock would also be paid \$5.5 million.

At the meeting I was handed a media release in which TWS Victorian campaigns manager Gavan McFadzean was quoted saying: "We are pleased to see the Victorian Government moving to protect native forests in the Strzelecki Ranges" No mention was made by TWS that National Sites of Conservation Significance would be logged under the new deal. The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) was quoted in the media release saying that the deal was "great news for one of Victoria's most important, and most beautiful natural areas."

However, the deal, far from protecting the ecological assets of the Strzeleckis (or East Gippsland for that matter), will allow a free-for-all in sites of national conservation significance in one of the most depleted bioregions in Victoria.

Hancock sent the media release to media outlets. A journalist noted in a June 10 email: "The Wilderness Society seem to be backing away from their initial support of the deal. I received a media release from them (which was sent to me by Hancock!!) praising the deal, and after 48 hours of chasing, several phone calls and e-mails, I finally got a response from TWS – referring me to Friends of the Earth! Who, clearly, don't support the deal at all. So they're obviously not interested in explaining why they support it, or if they still do. It's quite strange ..."

It appears that TWS has willingly sacrificed the Strzelecki

Rainforest Reserve (and the voluntary work of 12 years by local conservationists and Friends of the Earth) in order to improve its bargaining position with the Victorian government over East Gippsland forest issues. This high-risk strategy already appears to be backfiring, with TWS and the VNPA issuing a media release in October complaining about the logging of East Gippsland old growth, despite these areas being promised for protection in 2006.

Had Victorian environment groups presented a unified position that a deal to sacrifice the Strzeleckis cores and links to satisfy a shortfall in Hancock's timber supply was unacceptable, we would have been in a much stronger negotiating position. The message that the actions of TWS and the VNPA sends to the government and industry is that some environment groups do not stand shoulder to shoulder, but may be separately approached and cherry-picked to negotiate outcomes.

Susie Zent from Friends of Gippsland Bush said: "The Wilderness Society and Victorian National Parks Association have undermined the work of local people with extensive knowledge and expertise of the complex Strzelecki bioregion. Friends of Gippsland Bush are astonished that yet again a so called "umbrella" environment group has betrayed the people of Gippsland. The same scenario occurred in 1997 when Friends of Gippsland Bush negotiated an agreement with AMCOR whereby 12,000 hectares were secured for Nature Reserves in the Gippsland Region. Environment Victoria and the Wilderness Society launched a vitriolic personalised attack/campaign against members of our organisation. The information they relied on was provided by a mole working for the industry."

Anthony Amis is a land-use researcher with Friends of the Earth, Melbourne. He has spent 12 years working to protect the Strzelecki rainforests.

Creaking Native Title System Unable to Deliver Justice

Graham Ring

Justice is said to be blind. In matters of native title it has proven also to be excruciatingly slow. The moribund native title system has simply failed to deliver on the promise inherent in the great Eddie Mabo's triumph of 1992.

The eponymous High Court decision found that the right of "native title" could still be recognised in certain areas of the country where it had not been extinguished by acts of settler Australians. __Subsequently, Paul Keating had bravely employed his prime ministerial imprimatur to negotiate codifying legislation with indigenous leaders, pastoralists, miners and a host of other interested parties. _

However, it is difficult to reconcile the scenes of jubilation which swept the plush red benches of the Senate during the early hours of December 22, 1993, when the Native Title Act was finally passed, with the tortuous, process-driven system which it has bequeathed.

In April, the Full Bench of the Federal Court ruled on an appeal against Mr Justice Wilcox's 2006 Single Noongar Claim decision, which found that native title may continue to exist over some limited areas of crown land in suburban Perth. __Their Honours found that Justice Wilcox had failed to take into account certain matters which he should have considered, and thus dispatched the case back to the Federal Court for further hearings._

The preamble to the Native Title Act illuminates its laudable intentions. It speaks of "ensuring that Aboriginal people receive the full recognition and status within the Australian nation to which history, their prior rights and interests, and their rich and diverse cultures fully enable them to aspire".

But the legislation also states explicitly that if any inconsistency arose between the rights of native title holders and the rights of other interest holders, then the rights of the latter would always prevail.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma is not given to precipitate utterances. His recently released 2007 Native Title Report speaks of a system "in gridlock", and notes that many indigenous people feel that native title has delivered little in the way of meaningful results.

Indeed, it is difficult to identify other areas of public policy in which creaking legal machinery grinds on quite so remorselessly. Meanwhile, Aboriginal community elders die heartbroken, unable to wrest from the European legal system even the most symbolic acknowledgement of their prior ownership of the land.

The inability of the native title system to deliver justice

to the Indigenous people of this country stands in mute condemnation. __In February, Federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland told the Negotiating Native Title Forum in Brisbane that the burying of native title in "unnecessary complexity" is an affront to the heritage of indigenous Australians.

He greeted the Noongar appeal decision with a media release noting the outcome, and reprising the oft-heard mantra that the government's preference is for these matters to be resolved through negotiation rather than litigation.

Nevertheless, the tussle is set to continue in court. Rather optimistically, the Attorney-General also recognised the expressed commitment of the West Australian government to continue to recognise the Noongar peoples' traditional association with the land. It was this very same WA Labor government which had appealed the initial decision before the ink on the judgment was dry.

We cannot reasonably expect our courts to produce cutting-edge social justice outcomes, for that is not their task. Building a better society is significantly the purview of our legislators. But the harsh political truism that "there are no votes in blackfellas" militates against meaningful change. The ubiquitous and capable Professor Mick Dodson is working with the Victorian government and the Victorian Traditional Owners Land Justice Group to streamline native title processes.

Other jurisdictions will doubtless watch with interest, but experience suggests that hopes should be restrained. True, the native title system has enjoyed its moments in the sun over the years, but these have been sporadic, and costly. Native title is a victory won most often in remote country of spinifex and red dust. It's country which has failed to excite mining companies and is of only passing interest to pastoralists.

Country which can appear truly unremarkable to the European eye, but may be of sacred importance to traditional custodians for whom the nurture and protection of land is a life's work. _As a vehicle for the delivery of land justice to traditional owners, native title has emerged as a problematic conveyance. If justice delayed is justice denied, then Australia's First Peoples have cause for complaint.

Graham Ring is a writer for the National Indigenous Times. This article was originally published in the Canberra Times.

Native Title and the Clash of Civilisations

Peter Burdon

A schism of feeling is common throughout the colonial world.

It was noticed in Australia in 1844 by Richard Windeyer, a barrister and apologist for European colonisation. In a paper delivered in Sydney, he mounted a strong attack on the idea that Aboriginal people maintained rights to the land. But even when he had completed his analysis of the standard 'authorities' such as Vattel's 'The Law of Nations' and Blackstone's 'Commentaries', he was still troubled. He paused and asked the assembled crowd, "how is it our minds are not satisfied ... what means this whispering in the bottom of our hearts."

Windeyer is describing a knowledge many have – that our country was unjustly taken and stolen from the Aboriginal people who have lived here from time immemorial. He is also describing a feeling that is common to many of us here today – that the current legal mechanisms which help shape our relationship to the land, such as native title, are inadequate.

At the heart of the problem is the fundamental assumption that western law has the right and is able to accommodate the unique relationship Aboriginal people have to country.

Collision

The settlement of occupied lands necessarily involved the coming together of two very ancient and developed systems of property. To highlight these differences, let's begin by comparing two explanations of property, as expounded by western property theorist Joseph William Singer and Tangane-kald-Meintang woman Irene Watson.

While noting that there is not one universal definition of property, Singer begins by noting that: "Property concerns legal relations among people regarding control and disposition of valued resources. Note Well: Property concerns relations among people, not relations between people and things."

This understanding of property is commonly referred to as a 'bundle of rights' or a 'relationship' in recognition of the fact that one has multiple rights to any given object which can be enforced against others. The specific object has a role in this view, but only as the subject-matter of the bundle of rights.

In contrast to this view, Irene Watson notes: "The land is our mother, and is both nurturer and teacher, from which all life grows. Law, land and people are inseparably linked. Law has a relationship to the land; its people, spirit, ancestors and the universe are one ... The distinction between the spiritual and the material is a European construction."

How on earth can these two distinct views be reconciled?

Rather than allowing our first nations to retain and define their own relationship to country, the dominant culture has attempted to mould Aboriginal ideas into a western framework. This endeavour has been as successful as trying to push a square peg through a round hole.

Predictably, the result has been a native title process in Australia which does not reflect or satisfy traditional custodians. One of the clearest illustrations of this has been the courts' attempt at moulding indigenous property ideas into a bundle of rights.

Bundle of Rights: Western Australia v Ward

The case of *Western Australia v Ward* concerned a claim for native title over 7900 sq kms of the eastern Kimberley in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. On appeal, the Full Federal Court conceived of native title as a bundle of rights in relation to land and waters. The majority of *Beaumont and von Doussa JJ* held that that the bundle of rights that native title holders receive enables them to carry out certain recognised activities in relation to their land. However, these rights can be partially extinguished by removing some of the rights that make up the bundle.

Whether native title will continue to be viewed as a 'bundle of rights' has not been resolved. The majority in *Ward* noted the artificiality of trying to mould the indigenous relationship to country into common law. This artificiality can be seen in the court's analysis of the idea of speaking for country. The majority noted: "Speaking for' country is bound up with the idea that, at least in some circumstances, others should ask for permission to enter upon country or use it or enjoy its resources, but to focus only on the requirement that others seek permission for some activities would oversimplify the nature of the connection that the phrase seeks to capture. The difficulty of expressing [the] relationship is evident ... [y]et this is what is required by the [Native Title Act]. The spiritual or religious is translated into the legal. This requires the fragmentation of an integrated view of the ordering of affairs and rights and interest."

In this fragmented form, every right and interest for which recognition is claimed needs to be identified. Further, even though indigenous relationships to land may be unique and incommensurable, through the native title process they are given a meaning which renders them comparable to non-indigenous property rights and thus able to be extinguished where inconsistency occurs.

The Court recognised this and noted that "recognition

may cease where, as a matter of law, native title rights have been extinguished even though, but for that legal conclusion, on the facts native title would still subsist.” This formulation creates an inherently weak title and seriously impairs the extent to which indigenous people are able to enjoy their property rights.

Whatever direction native title takes in the future, it must be directed and advanced by the Traditional Owners of the land. Outside of the business and mining sector, Australian people are recognising that native title is not working. In 2004, the High Court described the system as an “impenetrable jungle ... which leaves everyone dissatisfied and many disappointed”.

Alongside the legal change, an important personal shift needs to occur. In spite of the law, we owe a greater obligation to the land and to our brothers and sisters that we share the land with. We need to get to know our home and the traditional custodians of the land. We need to learn to walk on this land with good law and live together in a respectful way. These are simple things we can all do right now.

Peter Burdon is a member of FoE Adelaide and a PhD student in law at Adelaide University.



“Of the 46 articles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Northern Territory intervention breaches at least 25 of them - more than half. The intervention also breaches almost half of the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Australia endorsed decades ago.”

- *The Intervention: a battalion of human rights breaches*, <<http://www.nit.com.au/News/story.aspx?id=16231>>

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In late September Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people from all over Australia converged at Mount Nancy camp in Alice Springs to share their ideas on the intervention and protest against it. Some travelled hundreds of kilometers just to be there. The overall experience is that the intervention is not working to protect children or improve disadvantage, is racially discriminatory and causing more hardships. Aboriginal people have been consistently outraged at the fundamental flaw of the NT intervention policy, namely the lack of consultation and community ownership of any programs aimed at effective community development.

Photos: Allan Mills and Natalie Lowrey



Invitation to Australia's Climate Action Summit – February 2009

Australia's Climate Action Summit Organising Team

In February 2009, community climate action groups across the continent are joining together for Australia's Climate Action Summit in Canberra, the weekend before the first day of the 2009 federal parliament.

One year on from the election of the Rudd Labor government, we are still waiting for serious action on climate change. In December 2009, Kevin Rudd will meet with world leaders in Copenhagen to set the framework and benchmarks for future global action on climate change. We need to ensure that the Australian government goes to Copenhagen with the strongest commitment to reducing greenhouse pollution and averting runaway climate change.

At February's Climate Action Summit, people from climate change groups will create and launch a cohesive and strategic national campaign, form a national grassroots network, and send a powerful message to the politicians in Canberra.

The Summit will include two days of facilitated meetings and workshops to build a unified national campaign. It will be followed by one day of dynamic training in climate campaigning skills for taking action, facilitating climate action groups, effective lobbying and more. On the first day of the 2009 federal parliament, we will mobilise thousands of people in a high-profile demonstration for real action on climate change.

Check out the Summit website:

www.climatemovement.org.au/summit.

How you can support Australia's Climate Action Summit:

1. Join, build or form a climate change group in your area, and come along to Australia's Climate Action Summit www.climatemovement.org.au/groups.
2. Write proposals for a national climate change campaign, network and policy – more information coming soon.
3. Encourage and mobilise people in your area to come along: contact info@climatesummit.org.au for posters, flyers and information packs.
4. Get involved in Summit organising meetings (fortnightly phone link-ups) or one of the working groups: contact info@climatesummit.org.au Already, people from Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle, Clean Energy for Eternity Bega, Friends of the Earth Melbourne and Sydney, Greenpeace, Australian Student Environment Network, Climate Action Pittwater and more are working together on this important Summit. We would love your input.
5. If you're in Canberra, help us organise logistics such as location, accommodation, billeting and food. Contact info@climatesummit.org.au.
6. Donate money, equipment, or in-kind skills and services: contact info@climatesummit.org.au.

See you in Canberra! For a safe and just climate future, Australia's Climate Action Summit Organising Team
www.climatemovement.org.au/summit
info@climatesummit.org.au.

let's kick the
COAL HABIT

MORATORIUM ON NEW COAL POWER STATIONS NOW!





FoE 'Greenhouse Mafia', Parliament House, Melbourne, September 24

Greenwashing Coal *Louise Morris*

It is an oxymoron and greenwashing in its most blatant form – ‘clean coal’. Australia is positioning itself to try to find new ways to burn coal while looking environmentally responsible, hence the terms ‘clean coal’, ‘cleaner coal’, ‘ultra-clean coal’ and ‘green coal’.

In 2007, Greenpeace and the Australian Climate Justice Project launched a complaint with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) alleging HRL Ltd engaged in conduct that is false, misleading and/or deceptive within the meanings of the Trade Practices Act by referring to its proposed coal-fired power plant in Victoria’s Latrobe Valley as a “new clean coal power station” and “IDGCC – Low Greenhouse Power from Brown Coal”. The claims were made on the company’s website and in media releases dated 17 November 2006 and 12 March 2007.

In September, the ACCC found that it could not support the complaint as the media releases were promotional and not an act of trade and commerce, and thus the Trade Practices Act did not apply.

The ACCC reached the view that HRL’s conduct in submitting applications for funding to the federal and Victorian governments, and to potential investors, may have been of a trading or commercial character directed towards promoting HRL’s so-called ‘clean coal’ technology. However, given the nature of the technical material provided and the sophistication of the target audience – power generators, investors and government scientists – the ACCC holds that it has been unable to establish evidence of misleading or deceptive conduct by HRL.

Nevertheless, the ACCC has stated that it is interested in continuing to pursue questionable green power and ‘clean coal’ claims. In June, it released a set of guidelines, ‘Carbon claims and the Trade Practices Act’, regarding the use of terms such as ‘low carbon’ and ‘carbon neutral’.

Friends of the Earth, the Australian Climate Justice Project, Greenpeace and other groups are looking into ways to challenge the HRL proposal and other planned new coal mines and power stations. With HRL contracted to build a total of five coal-fired power plants (including HRL in the Latrobe Valley) with its project partner Harbin Power Engineering, a subsidiary of Chinese state-owned Harbin Power Equipment Group, there are many more legal and other avenues to explore in debunking the myth that coal can ever be clean.

A new report into the HRL controversy has now been publicly released by Corporate Watch Australia in conjunction with Friends of the Earth’s Coal and Climate Campaign. The report, *HRL - Burning Coal at Three Minutes to Midnight*, raises serious concerns about the Latrobe Valley project’s environmental impacts, high level of public funding, low employment returns, the privatisation of HRL in 1995, and HRL’s operations in other countries.

Luke van der Meulen, of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), has raised questions in recent months about the extent to which the Victorian government may assist the trouble-plagued Latrobe Valley HRL project. van der Meulen has been seeking clarification as to whether there is any substance to allegations that HRL is seeking the gifting of the site and also the coal supply. Questions are also being raised about the company’s backtracking from the previous estimate of about 350 jobs to be created in the Latrobe Valley. HRL has \$150 million of state and federal government subsidies for its planned coal plant.

More information:

* ‘HRL - Burning Coal at Three Minutes to Midnight’

<www.corporatewatch.org.au/HRL>.

* ACCC, 2008, ‘Carbon claims and the Trade Practices Act’, <www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/833279>.

Climate Displacement Coalition

Damien Lawson

Friends of the Earth's Climate Justice campaign has launched a new alliance which aims to mobilise greater public support and government action around the growing problem of climate displacement.

The formation of the Climate Displacement Coalition was announced at the Pacific Calling for Climate Justice Conference in Sydney in October.

Around the world, hundreds of thousands of people are already being displaced by climate change. As climate instability grows these many thousands will become millions. Responding to such displacement will need varied and complex responses, including refocused development aid, resources for resettlement and new migration pathways to Australia and other countries.

While the many thousands of Pacific Islanders who will lose their homes because of the rising seas may be able to eventually resettle within the Pacific or Australia, the millions of people who will be displaced in Asia may not have such opportunities. For example, the loss of the Himalayan-Tibetan glaciers will see the seven giant Asian rivers lose much of their summer flows. Over one billion people live in the basins of these rivers.

Such a disaster can only be avoided by a global emergency effort to cut carbon pollution, but even with such action, millions will be displaced.

The Climate Displacement Coalition will seek to bring these problems into the Australian climate debate, creating cooperation and solidarity between communities in Australia whose "homelands" are affected by climate change and pushing for government action.

The objectives of coalition include commitments to:

- work for strong and urgent mitigation of carbon pollution in Australia to levels that can ensure a safe climate;
- campaign for the Australian government to allocate adequate resources to assist climate-affected communities to relocate and resettle;
- promote new migration pathways, for people facing climate displacement, particularly for Pacific Islanders;
- campaign for the government to establish a specific migration program and visa category for those displaced by climate change; and
- campaign for Australia to support a new international convention or protocol that will establish a framework for

recognition and assistance for those displaced by climate change.

The Pacific Islands Forum will be held in Australia late next year and is an opportunity to ensure the Labor government acts on its commitments to the Pacific.

For more information or to join the the coalition, email <damien.lawson@foe.org.au> or phone +61 3 9419 8700.

Pacific UN Climate Push

Damien Lawson

Pacific Islands countries have launched a campaign to get the UN Security Council to treat climate change as a threat to security. Palau's Ambassador to the United Nations, Stuart Beck, announced on September 11 that Palau had joined with the other members of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu) along with Australia, Austria, Canada, Israel, Maldives, New Zealand, Seychelles and Turkey in co-sponsoring and submitting a new draft resolution titled "Security and Climate Change" to the UN General Assembly.

The resolution is based on the right of the General Assembly under the United Nations Charter to call to the attention of the Security Council situations which are likely to endanger international peace and security and invites the Security Council to continue to address the threat posed by climate change to international peace and security.

The leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, meeting recently in Niue, committed their nations to advocate and support the recognition, in all international fora, of the urgent social, economic and security threat caused by climate change and sea-level rise. The leaders pointed to the urgency of the threat to the "territorial integrity" and "continued existence" of their island nations.

The Pacific Islands will now seek wide co-sponsorship in the hope of achieving a consensus on the resolution.

More information: <www.islandsfirst.org>.



Nanotechnology – Don't Believe the Green Hype

Georgia Miller

There is enormous public support for investment in sustainable, renewable energy alternatives to coal or nuclear power. There is also growing support for 'green' substitution of toxic chemicals. But all too often industry and governments are prepared to promote new (or old) technologies with a thick veneer of greenwash, presenting them as environmental saviours despite evidence of serious risks and uncertainties. The green hype around nanotechnology fits this pattern.

Nanotechnology, the 'science of the small', enables materials, systems and even living organisms to be manipulated at extremely small scales. Public awareness about nanotechnology remains low. But nanoparticles are already being used – unlabelled and largely unregulated – in sunscreens, cosmetics, food packaging and health supplements, fertilisers and pesticides, clothing, electrical goods, household appliances, fuel catalysts, industrial processing and manufacturing.

Nanotechnology is promoted as a techno-fix to our climate and energy woes, enabling unfettered economic

expansion and consumption while dramatically reducing our environmental footprint. The Howard government's 'Smaller, Cleaner, Cheaper, Faster, Smarter' nanotechnology report is just one example of the enthusiasm with which nanotechnology's putative environmental credentials have been used in its promotion. The CSIRO has gone so far as to suggest that by enabling greatly increased production of cheap solar energy, greater energy and resource efficiency in 'clean' manufacturing, and atomic scale recycling of all inputs, nanotechnology will enable us to 'decouple' resource use from economic expansion.

It is rarely acknowledged that manufacturing nanoparticles and nano-films used in solar cells and elsewhere is extremely energy intensive; the chemicals required for nano-manufacturing are often highly toxic, as are many nanoparticles themselves; and the carbon nanotubes mooted for use in lightweight superstrong plane parts cause mesothelioma (the deadly cancer previously thought to be caused only by asbestos). Friends of the Earth has argued that in addition to introducing a new generation of toxic

chemicals, nanotechnology is also likely to underpin a new wave of industrial expansion and economic globalisation that will magnify existing resource and energy use.

Future nanotechnology-based environmental gains are often touted in an effort to win public support and to head off unease about the health and environmental risks of nanoproducts that are now entering homes, workplaces and ecosystems. The problem is that while a very high level of proof is demanded of those calling for regulation of nanotechnology's environmental risks, claims of environmental benefits have largely passed unchallenged and unassessed. As yet there are no life-cycle assessments comparing the sustainability of conventional and nanotechnology-based materials. However there is emerging evidence that any environmental gains achieved by nanotechnology may be outweighed by the environmental costs of production.

Here is a brief summary of nanotechnology's environmental pros and cons in a few key areas.

Energy and Environmental Costs

Nanotechnology proponents have claimed that nanoparticles will lower energy and resource use. This is because small quantities of more potent nanoparticles can theoretically accomplish the tasks of much larger amounts of conventional materials, and because carbon nanotubes are predicted to enable lighter industrial components whose use will require less energy. However academics at the University of Illinois at Chicago have found that the manufacture of nanoparticles has an unexpectedly high environmental footprint. This was related to highly specialised production environments, high energy and water demands of processing, low yields, high waste generation, the production and use of greenhouse gases such as methane and the use of toxic chemicals and solvents such as benzene.

In a separate life-cycle study of carbon nanofibre production, academics at Ohio State University found that their potential to contribute to global warming, ozone layer depletion, environmental or human toxicity may be as much as 100 times greater per unit of weight than those of conventional materials like aluminium, steel and polypropylene. Nanoparticles are likely to be used in far smaller quantities than conventional substances, so a life-cycle assessment of the products they are used in (which has yet to be performed on any nano-products) would give a more accurate estimate of total energy and environmental impacts. Nonetheless, these early findings led the scientists to conclude that any environmental gains of nanoparticles may be outweighed by the environmental costs of production.

Friends of the Earth Australia (FoEA) and others have voiced concern that nanoparticles themselves constitute a new generation of toxic chemicals. As particle size decreases, in many nanoparticles the production of free radicals

increases, as does toxicity. Test tube studies have shown that nanoparticles now in commercial use can damage human DNA, negatively affect cellular function and even cause cell death. There is a small but growing body of scientific studies showing that some nanoparticles are toxic to algae, invertebrate and fish species that regulators use as environmental indicators. There is also evidence that some nanoparticles could impair the function or reproductive cycles of bacteria, fungi or earthworms which play a key role in nutrient cycling that underpins ecosystem function.

The argument is often made that the potential environmental impact of potent nanoparticles will be greatly reduced because of the relatively small quantities in which they will be used. However, in 2006 the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars' Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies estimated that 58,000 tonnes of nanoparticles will be produced world-wide from 2011 to 2020. The Center stated its concerns that given the potency of nanoparticles, this could have an ecological impact equivalent to between five million and 50 billion tonnes of conventional materials.

Nano Solar

Amidst the hype that nano solar will soon deliver energy half the price of oil, coal or gas, last year the CEO of nanotechnology analyst Cientifica warned that we needed to take a "reality check" about its promise: "The companies using nanotechnology to produce thin film solar systems have burned through a quarter of a billion dollars of venture capital money over six years, and still haven't cracked the manufacturing and reliability issues which will make the technology economic."

Some of nano solar's more exciting predicted applications are still at 'early stage' research, like energy generating plastic-based paint that can harvest infrared (non-visible) light. It remains to be seen whether or not such early stage research can be turned into practical products. However, other applications are reaching the market. Nanoparticles like titanium dioxide, silver, quantum dots and cadmium telluride are being applied to thin film solar cells to boost their efficiency to as high as 14%, while quantum-dot based semiconductors are being developed to increase the currently low efficiency (around 6%) of polymer-based 'organic' photovoltaic plastics.

A few US-based companies have recently claimed to be getting close to producing one gigawatt of solar energy annually. Company Nano Solar produces thin film cells at up to 14% efficiency (most other firms claim 6-12%) and claims to be nearing economic production at US\$1/watt. Konarka has recently opened the world's largest roll-to-roll flexible plastic film solar manufacturing facility. First Solar, which produces cadmium-telluride nano film, currently has around 10% efficiency. In short, nano solar does not appear to be about to either deliver huge efficiency gains or to halve

the cost of energy any time soon, although commercial production is slowly scaling up.

Efficiency gains in solar harvesting and manufacturing are certainly being made using nanotechnology – but they are modest gains. There is not yet any life-cycle assessment of nano solar products so it's hard to tell what energy efficiency gains will exist once the energy required for manufacturing is taken into account. Furthermore, many thin film technologies are using nanoparticles that pose quite serious toxicity problems (e.g. cadmium, quantum dots, silver and titanium dioxide nanoparticles). First Solar has committed to operate an end-of-life collection scheme, which is to be commended. However this is not the norm and there is still no safe method for disposal of waste nanoparticles.

Carbon Nanotubes

Carbon nanotubes – cylinders made of carbon atoms which are 10,000 times thinner than a strand of human hair – are one of the nanoparticles generating the most excitement among industry. They are the stiffest and strongest fibres known and also have unique electrical properties. Carbon nanotubes are already being used to reinforce specialty parts for planes and cars and high performance plastics, in fuel filters, electronic goods and carbon-lithium batteries. Their future use has been predicted to enable super lightweight planes and cars that will use much less fuel, dramatically reducing the environmental costs of air travel. They are also mooted for use in textiles, pharmaceuticals, food packaging and a range of other applications.

It is possible the huge energy demands of nanotubes manufacture could offset any efficiency gains from their enabling production of lightweight components. Lightweight planes could also simply lead to bigger planes or more flights being taken. However there are also serious concerns about their health and environmental risks, in particular, that some carbon nanotubes can cause asbestos-like harm if inhaled.

In 2004, the United Kingdom's Royal Society, and risk specialists at the world's second largest reinsurance agent Swiss Re, warned that nanotubes may behave like asbestos once in our lungs. Since then, a series of experiments have demonstrated that when introduced into the lungs of rodents, carbon nanotubes cause inflammation, granuloma development, fibrosis, artery 'plaque' responsible for heart attacks, and DNA damage. Two independent studies have shown that carbon nanotubes can also cause the onset of mesothelioma – a cancer previously thought to be associated only with asbestos exposure.

Nano-geoengineering

Geoengineering is an emerging field where proponents hope to mitigate environmental problems by using technology to 're-engineer' the environment, for example by 'fertilising' the ocean to produce huge algal blooms to

absorb carbon dioxide, or by releasing nanoparticles into the upper atmosphere in an attempt to stop global warming. Friends of the Earth is concerned that it is difficult to accurately model or predict the ecological consequences of such activities and that there is potential for large-scale ecological harm.

The intentional mass release of nanoparticles into the environment has attracted opposition from senior scientists internationally. In June, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) supported a de facto moratorium on ocean fertilisation – despite Australia, China and Brazil blocking the moratorium until the eleventh hour. The moratorium came as several companies were planning to dump large quantities of tiny, perhaps nanoscale, iron filings into the ocean to produce a huge algal bloom that could supposedly suck up carbon dioxide – enabling the companies to claim lucrative carbon credits.

In the wake of the decision, research has been presented finding that in the ocean, iron encourages the growth of large populations of some algae species that produce domoic acid - a potent neurotoxin. German Environment Minister and CBD president Sigmar Gabrielle told Reuters, "It's a very strange idea that technology can solve everything. It's very risky and shows what humans are ready to do. I'm glad we came to a de facto moratorium." However, despite the moratorium, leading nano-geoengineering companies are gearing up to convince governments to support their projects as a response to climate change.

Environmental life-cycle assessment

Early evidence of the much greater energy demands of producing nanoparticles, the significant quantities of potentially toxic waste their production generates, and the ecotoxic behaviour of many nanoparticles themselves have cast doubt on industry claims that nanotechnology offers 'green' solutions to ecological problems.

In many ways, nanotechnology offers the ultimate attempted techno-fix to problems that require social, economic and political solutions. In addition to questioning the energy demands and toxicity of nanoparticle production, we need to question the logic that underpins the quest for economic growth at all costs. Without a change in the growth mentality, there is little possibility that any efficiency gains made by nanotechnology will deliver environmental benefits rather than simply underpinning greater economic expansion.

More information: <<http://nano.foe.org.au>>.

Georgia Miller is a campaigner with FoE Australia's Nanotechnology Project. <georgia.miller@foe.org.au>.



A Tale Of Two Arms Fairs

AIDEX '91. Photos by Leo Bild.

Ian Macintyre



Iain McIntyre revisits the AIDEX '91 protest and looks at how the peace movement recently scuttled a similar event, the 2008 Asia Pacific Defence and Security Exhibition.

Over 10 days in November 1991, up to 2,000 protesters descended on Canberra to blockade the National Exhibition (NATEX) site, hoping to close down the Australian International Defence Equipment Exhibition (AIDEX) arms fair.

In a foretaste of the anti-globalisation protests to come, the campaign brought together people from a myriad of political causes and countercultural scenes and gave them a clear goal and the numbers and determination to meet it. Despite police repression, internal conflict and media vilification, the AIDEX '91 demonstration disrupted the event to such a degree that no other city in Australia would host an arms bazaar on the same scale again.

AIDEX '91 was not the first event of its kind to be opposed by the peace movement in Australia. In 1986, trade fair organisers Desiko Pty Ltd unsuccessfully tried to launch the Pacific Area Defence Exhibition (PADEX) as "the biggest event of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere." ACTU black bans and widespread opposition, on the back of massive recent anti-nuclear rallies, saw the event moved from Sydney to Darwin before being abandoned altogether.

With the Hawke government engaging in a dramatic increase in military spending, Desiko soon re-emerged to launch AIDEX '89, an event which saw 214 companies, governments and official bodies from fourteen countries take part. Three days of protest against the show saw rallies, silent vigils and an ACT Trades and Labor Council endorsed picket of the NATEX site take place. Police arrested 33 protesters with many complaining of rough treatment.

Whilst the 1989 protest did not seriously disrupt the arms fair, it did set the scene for two years of frenetic campaigning. With the ALP continuing its arms export drive and conflicts in the Gulf, Bougainville and East Timor clearly demonstrating the results of militarism, the Stop AIDEX Campaign branched out significantly in 1990 to include supporters in every state. Protests were held outside arms companies and state ministries across the country and huge "Stop AIDEX" banners were dropped from the Westgate Bridge in Melbourne and cranes at Cockatoo Island in Sydney.

Alongside these efforts came an enormous lobbying and education campaign run by a myriad of churches, unions and social justice organisations. With the national campaign gaining momentum, July 1991 saw an initial victory for the protesters with the ACT government announcing it would not allow arms fairs to take place in the Territory in the future.

In the days before AIDEX '91 was officially to start, an initially small picket of NATEX mushroomed into a major

blockade. Non Violent Direct Action activists blocked one gate with their bodies and engaged in dialogue with the police whilst others built barricades out of car bodies, pickets and barbed wire. Other protesters combined the use of tripods, vehicles, barricades and physical picketing. Despite often heated disagreements over appropriate tactics and responses to police violence, the diverse range of tactical styles and political outlooks combined effectively to deny Desiko the use of the showgrounds.

Unprepared for such a large and determined protest, some individual police initially lashed out against protesters, but with Desiko becoming increasingly desperate, police repression soon took on a more official tone. Canberra's paramilitary Operations Support Group were brought in and paraded with shields and batons whilst members of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) were drafted in from across the country regardless of whether they had been appropriately trained. In response to the rising level of police violence, the majority of protesters remained non-violent using humour such as singing Monty Python's 'Always look on the bright side of life' to relieve the rising tensions.

Initial attempts to remove the blockade failed with the result that a massive operation was launched to take more than 180 protesters into custody. Whilst this allowed the exhibitors to finally get their equipment onto the site, attempts by AFP prosecutors to prevent arrestees from returning to NATEX failed. As a result the police resorted to violently dragging protesters from the roads surrounding the site and using dangerous martial arts holds, practices which the ACT Ombudsman Philippa Smith was highly critical of in her 1993 report into the policing of the protest.

The AIDEX '91 protest dominated national news reports and the pages of the Canberra Times for over a week. The majority of this coverage was critical of the demonstrators, focusing on minor incidents of protester violence and couching visuals of police violence in terms of the need to restore law and order. Towards the end of the protest, police allegations became hysterical with claims that protesters had smeared faeces (actually ochre) on themselves and wielded knives, acid-filled condoms and nail-studded planks of wood against police. Despite none of the officers present receiving wounds consistent with the use of such weapons and no-one being charged with their use or possession, the mainstream media largely reported these claims as fact.

AIDEX '91 had a major effect on the Australian left and the divisions present during the protest were reflected in the debates that followed. Some hailed the blockade as a victory and welcomed the return to militancy that had been seen both in Canberra and in a number of demonstrations held during 1992. Others felt that the negativity generated by the media and burn-out associated with such a long and fraught blockade outweighed any gains. A small number of activists continued to feel the fall-out directly as the Department of Social Security, with the aid of the AFP,



"These are feral, low-life people that want society to be in a state of near anarchy for their own perverse pleasure"

SA Acting Premier Kevin Foley following the decision to abandon the APDSE arms bazaar in Adelaide. Unfortunately, he was talking about peace campaigners not the arms industry.

investigated a number for being 'professional protesters', a decision that was eventually condemned by the Federal Privacy Commissioner as threatening "fundamental freedoms".

Whilst arguably only having a marginal impact on continuing growth of the arms trade itself, the blockade was undoubtedly a huge success in terms of the goal of shutting down AIDEX. Plans by Desiko to hold AIDEX '93 on federal land in Canberra faltered as did an attempt to book a similar event in Queanbeyan. Ironically the negative portrayal of the protest was to serve the peace movement in the long run as further attempts by Desiko to book arms fairs around the country were rejected by local and state authorities afraid of bringing "thugs and terrorists" into their community.

2008 Asia Pacific Defence and Security Exhibition

For the next 17 years the arms industry shied away from holding large-scale trade exhibitions, opting instead to meet and display their wares behind the façade of air shows or away from public view in hotels and military installations. However with the memory of AIDEX fading, a new company, APDS Exhibition Ltd (AEL) emerged in 2007. Announcing it was to hold the Asia Pacific Defence and Security Exhibition (APDSE) at the Adelaide Convention Centre from 11 November 2008, AEL engaged a number of full-time staff to promote and facilitate the event. The arms fair received a hearty endorsement as well as financial support from the South Australian ALP government which had been talking up South Australia as the 'Defence State' for some time.

From late 2007, individuals and peace groups began lobbying against APDSE and by the middle of 2008

coalitions in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne had begun to coalesce around the aim of planning a major protest for November. By choosing to open APDSE on the 90th anniversary of the ending of WW1, AEL had handed its

opponents an important public relations advantage, but many on the protesters' side were unsure as to whether they would be able to muster the numbers to fully shut the fair down. Nevertheless they began producing educational and promotional material in the form of posters, websites and leaflets as well as organising benefit gigs, public meetings, transport and an Adelaide Peace Festival. Many of the debates over appropriate protest tactics and the centralisation of decision making that had arisen during AIDEX, and since, were soon revisited. By August 2008 however, it was clear that a blockade of the Adelaide Convention Centre would take place alongside other protest activities.

With the anti-APDSE campaign gaining momentum, the shock announcement came in early September that APDSE would be cancelled due to security concerns. As with the AIDEX protest, the demonisation of protesters immediately came to the fore with Acting SA Premier Kevin Foley claiming in the Sunday Mail that the decision was made due to expectations that "feral, low-life people that want society to be in a state of near anarchy for their own perverse pleasure" would be descending on Adelaide.

In spite of these predictable statements it was evident from Foley's other comments that the projected costs of policing had been the determining factor in the cancellation. The SA Police's Protective Security Service command had briefed the government's Emergency Management Committee on August 28 that they would require around 500 officers for the protest and annual leave had already been cancelled for the entire force. The role of costs was reinforced by AEL's Phil Guy, who also admitted that the federal government and Department of Defence had failed to get behind the project, further undermining its viability. Once more the political and economic costs of holding an arms fair have been shown to outweigh the potential profits and the peace movement should take heart in a rare victory against militarism.

Iain McIntyre's latest book, 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life: The AIDEX '91 Story' can be purchased online from <www.foe.org.au/shop> or <www.newinternationalistbookshop.org.au>. His previous books include 'Tomorrow is Today: Australia in the Psychedelic Era, 1966-70' (Wakefield Press) and 'Disturbing the Peace: Tales from Australia's Rebel History' (Homebrew Books).



From Marinduque to Tampakán: The Legacy of Mining in the Philippines

Mia Pepper

Photo: Tampakán, June 2008: A Bl'aan family who have agreed to mining and relocation in exchange for jobs.

Flying over the Philippines archipelago, you see not only white sand beaches and lush forests filled with coconuts, mangos and papayas, you see large-scale mining operations and plumes of waste being pumped into the ocean.

Mining expanded under the Marcos regime from 1965-86. There was a lull in the industry, then in 1995 the Philippines Mining Act was amended, again opening the doors to transnational mining corporations. The current Philippine government has declared 24 priority mining areas, at a time of growing poverty and conflict in the Philippines. The government is desperate for foreign investment and communities are desperate for employment.

Marinduque

Marinduque, a small and beautiful island south of Manila, was one of the first areas in the Philippines to endure large-scale mining by a transnational corporation. During the late 1960s, Placer Dome created Marcopper Corporation to mine copper and gold from three open pits in the highlands of Marinduque. In 2006, Placer

Dome sold all its assets to Barrick Gold, making Barrick the world's largest gold mining company.

During Placer Domes' 40-odd years of mining at Marinduque, the company used marine tailings disposal. About 200 million tonnes of tailings and waste rock were pumped into Calancan Bay, a tiny fishing village on the north coast. The local community used to profit through the fish market but they are now forced to live subsistence lives. Decades of dumping toxic waste into Calancan Bay has caused serious health problems for the people living there, through the absorption of heavy metals including lead, cadmium and mercury. People suffer from skin diseases, stomach aches, headaches, blood-related illnesses, aplastic anaemia, other cancers and still-births.

The University of the Philippines was commissioned by the Philippine government to investigate unexplained illnesses and deaths. Of the people studied, 67% had anaemia, 25% had unacceptable cyanide levels, all had elevated lead levels, and many had elevated levels of zinc, copper, cadmium and mercury.

The Philippine government declared a state of calamity for health reasons over several barangays (towns) in the

north of Marinduque in March 1998. People who receive treatment are still returning home to contaminated environments and they continue to get sick.

Two rivers in Marinduque, the Mogpog and the Boac Rivers, endured a similar fate to Calancan Bay. In 1996, four million tonnes of heavy metal and acid-generating tailings seeped into the Boac River, rendering it biologically dead. In 2003, a dam built to keep silt and waste out of the Mogpog River burst and flooded the river, destroying houses and killing livestock. This flood left behind a legacy of acid mine drainage and silt laden with heavy metals in the headwaters of the Mogpog, affecting the entire river.

The people of Calancan Bay, Mogpog, Boac and Santa Cruz are all forced to live in environments with no clean water, no clean food and where agriculture and fishing do not produce enough food for local needs. Illness is rampant and there is no relief from exposure to heavy metals. Studies by the University of the Philippines found people drinking water from wells have higher rates of exposure, indicating ground-water is also contaminated.

In the mountains, open pits filled with mine tailings are left behind, a disaster waiting to happen. The mine lease area, owned by Barrick Gold, is subject to a 50-year moratorium and yet mining at Marinduque is still on the Philippine government's list of 24 priority mines.

Tampakan

Heading south from Marinduque to the island of Mindanao, relatively untouched by the Spanish and US occupations, there are volcanoes, forests and pineapple plantations as far as the eye can see. But at Tampakan, on the island's south coast, you can smell the tension. To celebrate the town's 36th anniversary, they held a festival with Bl'aan Indigenous dancers, political speeches about the rice crisis and mining representatives from Xstrata talking about sustainable development and cultural respect.

Exploration of the gold resources at Tampakan began in the early 1980s by WMC. Now, Xstrata Copper and Indophil, an Australian company, plan to develop a mine in conjunction with Sagitarius Mining Inc (SMI).

In December 2007, the New Peoples Army (NPA) burnt the Xstrata-SMI base camp and has remained there ever since. Since the government deployed the military in Tampakan in early 2008, at least 10 members of the NPA have been killed. "We will continue to take direct punitive measures on Xstrata-SMI," the NPA said in March 2008, "for as long as they continue to operate on our territories."

The Tampakan project is in pre-feasibility stage; no environmental impact statements have been released to the Bl'aan, the Barangay Council or the Provincial Council. Xstrata-SMI has not disclosed whether they will use open

pit mining, whether they will be processing ore on-site, what chemicals they will use, or how tailings and other waste will be managed. There are fears that Xstrata-SMI plan to dispose of tailings in the sea.

Much like Marinduque, there are few job opportunities in Tampakan and people live subsistence lives. Some Bl'aan families have been in negotiations with Xstrata-SMI and have signed agreements to be relocated from their homelands in exchange for jobs. The community does not know how many jobs, what sorts of jobs and for how long these jobs will be made available to them.

The political and social climate in the Philippines is perfect for resources exploitation – the desperation of the people is so stark and the options are so few. Marinduque and Tampakan are but two examples of hundreds of small- and large-scale mining operations in the Philippines. Many large-scale operations have used marine and riverine tailings disposal causing serious risks and damage to human health and the environment.

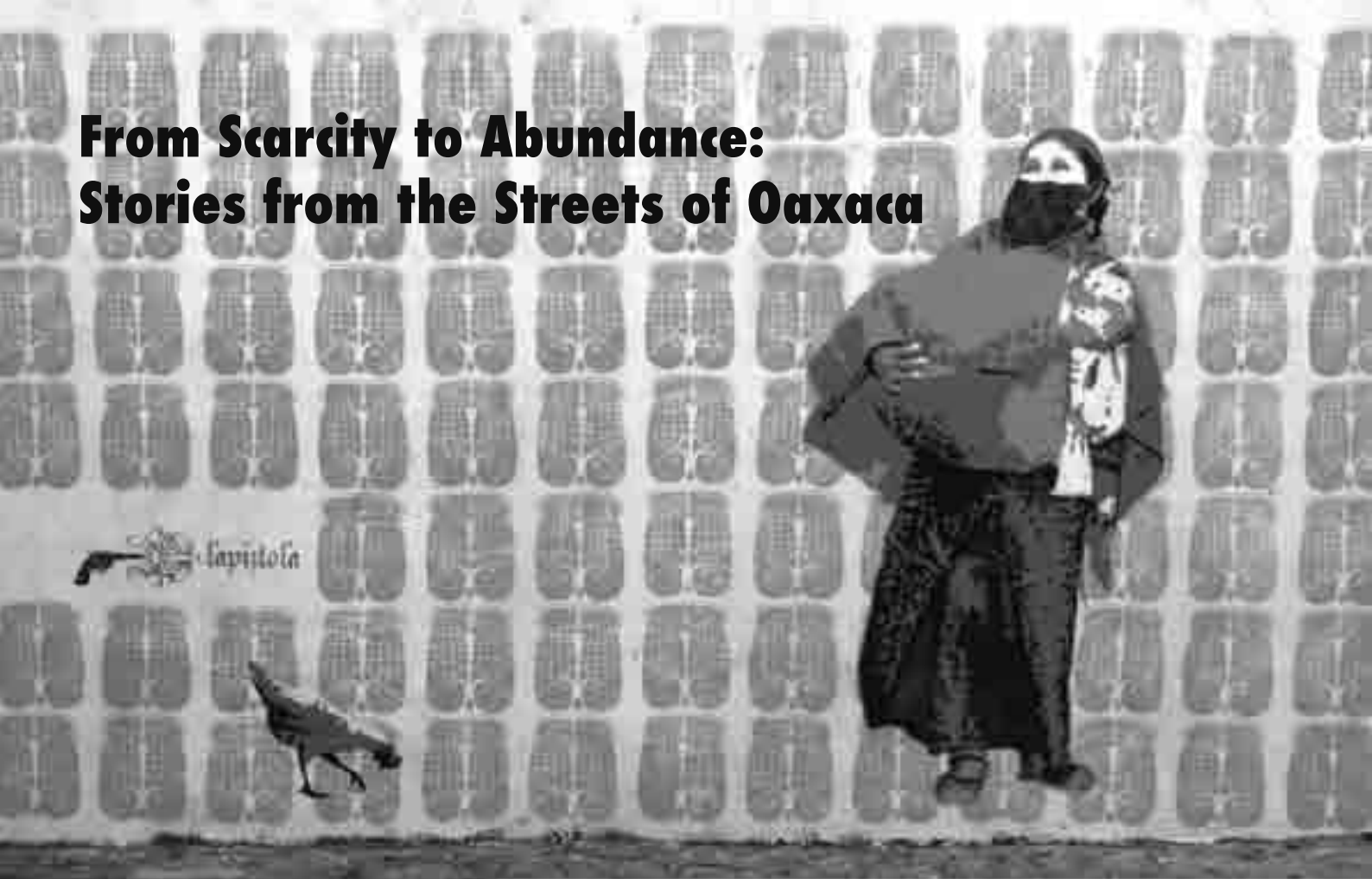
The government and the military have played a role in encouraging and protecting foreign investment despite its impacts on the people of the Philippines. Extrajudicial killings of community leaders and activists are not uncommon in mining regions. Too often, mining companies have played a sinister and manipulative role.

When you look at Tampakan in its almost pristine state, poor as it is, Tampakan and the people there are better off now than the people of Calancan Bay, Mogpog, Boac and Santa Cruz are after 40 years of mining. The people of Marinduque almost unanimously say, 'no mining, never again'.

More information: Mineral Policy Institute, 'Mined Your Own Waste' campaign, <www.mpi.org.au>. Interviews from Marinduque and Tampakan will be podcast on the Mineral Policy Institute website in the near future.

Mia Pepper visited the Philippines in June to attend a training program on Human Rights and Business run by the UNSW Law Faculty.

From Scarcity to Abundance: Stories from the Streets of Oaxaca



Street art depicting maize and a Zapatista woman, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, Mexico.
Photo by Joel Catchlove.

Joel Catchlove

There's something brewing on the streets of Oaxaca. The genteel colonial centre is vividly scrawled with graffiti and much of it is political. Spray paint depicts everything from giant, masked Lucha Libre wrestlers with the caption *La lucha sigue* ('The struggle continues'), to repeated references to the Zapatistas, the indigenous-based rebel movement in the neighbouring state of Chiapas.

Small, scrawny figures in the trademark Zapatista ski-masks adorn street signs, the masked face of Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos appears in bold black on freshly painted walls, while on another, stencils depict a masked indigenous woman harvesting corn beneath the line "corn is our life".

Amid the Zapatistas, another line repeats itself, in stencil or running spray-paint: *Oaxaca Libre, 14 de Junio, No se olvida* ('Free Oaxaca, June 14, Do not forget'). While it scarcely registered in the Australian media, and few media outlets anywhere fully grasped the depth of what was happening, for five months in 2006, the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca was, as Al Giordano describes, "a government-free zone", "not governed from above, but rather self-governed by popular assembly."

What began as a teachers' strike for better wages and conditions grew into a massive, non-violent, broad-based social movement that drove the corrupt and universally despised governor into hiding, and laid the foundations

for a truly participatory democracy. As the people of Oaxaca realised that the corrupt government needed them more than they needed it, they began a shift (to use a phrase of Oaxaca's Universidad de la Tierra) from the scarcity of dependence to the abundance of community self-reliance.

Community Self-Government

Oaxaca has a heritage of community self-government in its diverse indigenous population. Four out of five municipalities in the state still govern themselves through a process of communal assemblies, known as 'practices and customs' or *usos y costumbres*, a system that functions by consensus and does not acknowledge political parties. Furthermore, as Nancy Davies describes, "statewide, the greater part of public works in four hundred small communities are still carried out by citizen *tequios* [the traditional indigenous system of unpaid community service] that accomplish a variety of tasks like building roads; repairing churches, bringing in the harvest; and sharing the expenses of weddings, baptisms and deaths."

With state and federal levels of Mexican government apparently riddled with corruption and with governments everywhere increasingly wedded to neoliberal economic

policies, the critical importance of community self-reliance is becoming increasingly clear. It is this self-reliance that two Oaxaqueño organisations, Casa Chapulin and the Universidad de la Tierra, seek to cultivate.

The Casa Chapulin collective (named for Oaxaca's famous snack of fried grasshoppers or *chapulines*) was born in the adrenalin rush of Oaxaca's five months of community government. As Diana Denham, one of the initiators of the collective explains, Casa Chapulin formed after Oaxaca's corrupt governor Ulises Ruiz Diaz ordered police to attack a teacher's sit-in in the town's main plaza with helicopters and teargas on 14 June 2006, triggering an all-out revolt.

The Struggle for the Media

Realising that much mainstream media was unable to comprehend what was happening in Oaxaca, the Casa Chapulin collective initially adopted a role of independent journalists, documenting and broadcasting the uprising around the world. As the movement grew, and the retaliation of the government and its henchmen became more vicious, the collective also provided human rights support for other participants in the social movement. As Denham told us, the struggle for the media was a key battle of the Oaxaca uprising. One of Casa Chapulin's most recent projects is the publishing of a book, entitled *Teaching Rebellion: stories from the grassroots mobilisation in Oaxaca*, that documents the astounding story of the uprising through the testimonials of the citizens involved. Through stories like the "March of Pots and Pans", Denham highlights both the importance of community-controlled media, and how the uprising inspired the involvement of people from all backgrounds and sectors of society. In early August 2006, thousands of women from all over Oaxaca descended on the state television and radio studios, brandishing saucepans and cooking utensils. They entered, requested half an hour of airtime to air their

grievances and when they were refused, they peacefully occupied the entire complex. The employees left, and the women ran the station for three weeks, broadcasting live news on the movement, together with documentaries and stories on local and global issues and social movements.

When the government retook Channel 9 by force, the movement responded within hours, non-violently seizing all eleven of Oaxaca's commercial radio stations in a demonstration of popular power. By noon the following day, the social movement had voluntarily returned all but two, which the movement retained for its own uses.

Such astonishing collective strength was possible through the formation of the *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* (Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca, or APPO). The APPO formed within days of the June 14 attack on the teachers, drawing together hundreds of people representing a broad array of unions, social, political, human rights and non-governmental organisations, collectives, farmers, indigenous people, church figures and citizens from communities across the state.

While the APPO provided a forum for action and governance across the community, Denham suggests that part of its strength was its simultaneously decentralised nature: that everyone who participates is a representative of the APPO. As the popular catch-cry went, "*Todos somos APPO*" ('We are all APPO'). Such decentralisation meant that the APPO was suddenly everywhere. Pirate radio stations were APPO (Mexican law only permits commercial or state radio, making all community radio stations illegal), students organising in their universities were APPO, housewives storming radio stations were APPO.

Casa Chapulin now focuses on seven main areas: gender, popular education, immigration, urban agriculture, community-based economies, community-controlled media, and human rights and political prisoners. While it runs weekly community workshops and hosts guest

From left to right: Graffiti cleaners, Oaxaca City; La lucha sigue - The struggle continues. Photos by Joel Catchlove



speakers on a wide array of topics, the main focus of Casa Chapulin (and its sister collective Casa de la Paz in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas) is education for social change, through a program of hosting and educating activists in local issues.

This 'activist exchange' is intended to provide participants with a spark for community work in their own home communities, facilitating the building of broad political networks and increasing access to ideas.

University of the Earth

The Universidad de la Tierra (University of the Earth) was born on the crest of another era of democratic promise for Mexico. The 2000 federal election carried with it the possibility of finally dislodging the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), a notoriously corrupt organisation that had rusted in power for the past 70 years (The PRI is the party Oaxaca's Governor Ruiz represents).

Meanwhile, in the north-eastern highlands of Oaxaca, the Mixe indigenous group had begun expelling teachers from their communities. While acknowledging that education was essential for their children, the Mixe asserted that the existing schooling system was one of the most powerful tools of cultural destruction. Mixe children were forced to attend school for 6-8 hours every day, rather than working in the fields or participating in community life and thus learning the necessary skills for contribution and participation in Mixe society. Furthermore, formal schooling emphasised a set of values that didn't reflect the community's needs: values that encouraged students to move away to city universities and pursue careers in urban centres far from their culture and communities.

From this context, founding member Sergio Beltrán tells us, the Universidad de la Tierra emerged. Placing community self-reliance and self-determination at the core of its educational principles, the Universidad is determined to reclaim the sense of the university as a public space for debating and sharing knowledge. The Universidad has no teachers, no curriculum and no grades. Rather, it views itself as a community of learners that facilitate the seeking of knowledge.

Potential students (or 'learners' as Beltrán calls them) approach the Universidad with a proposal for what they would like to learn. According to the Universidad's criteria, the proposal, which often takes the form of a concrete project for a community, must be socially balanced (it must be relevant and make a contribution to the person's community), ecologically sensitive and economically feasible. Advisers will then work with the learner for up to three months to develop a 'path of learning', helping them to find the resources they need, putting them in touch with people already working in their field of interest or who have initiated similar projects,

or supporting them to become apprentices in their area, underscored by a belief in 'learning by doing'. "Everyone will answer your questions, but no one will tell you what to do," says Beltrán. "You are in control of your learning process."

The Universidad's focus on self-reliance extends well beyond its formal 'academic' work – as broad as that is. One of the Universidad's long-standing projects is CACITA (*Centro Autónomo para la Creación Intercultural de Tecnologías Apropriadas*), an appropriate technology workshop in the suburbs of Oaxaca. Beltrán emphasises that truly appropriate technology is technology that can be "appropriated". That is, it is adaptable to a range of contexts and can be developed with a range of local materials by the community itself. Solar panels, he argues, are not appropriate technology. Instead, they only represent a shift in dependence from one industrially produced technology (for example, a fossil fuel power plant) to another.

In mid-2008, the Universidad initiated *Guerreros Sin Armas* ('Warriors Without Weapons'). Originating in Brazil, *Guerreros Sin Armas* is based on the principles of non-violent communication. Through collective work, the project supports a community in building a desired project using resources and skills from within the community.

With *Guerreros Sin Armas*, Colonia El Diamante, a neighbourhood with no public services, no municipal sewer, and only partly connected to electricity, took vacant land and using only their own resources converted it into a public park – no small thing in a city that has only two metres of green space per person. As Beltrán highlights, projects such as these are very much about transforming a sense of scarcity to a realisation of the abundance already present within a community's knowledge, skills and resources.

While the Mexican government ultimately unleashed the full strength of its military and paramilitary forces to bring Oaxaca back under its rule, the seeds of self-determination continue to take root in Oaxaca and beyond. Oaxaca's experiment in self-government, and the organisations like Casa Chapulin and the Universidad de la Tierra that continue to work to build resilient communities, offer a model and inspiration for communities everywhere to begin a transition to the abundance of self-reliance.

More information:

* Nancy Davies, 'The People Decide: Oaxaca's Popular Assembly', Narco News Books.

* Diana Denham & CASA Collective, 'Teaching Rebellion: Stories from the grassroots mobilisation in Oaxaca', PM Press.

* Gustavo Esteva, 'The Oaxaca Commune and Mexico's Autonomous Movements', Ediciones Basta!

* CASA Chapulin, <www.casachapulin.org>.

* Universidad de la Tierra, <www.unitierra.org>.

* Guerreros Sin Armas, <<http://egsaoaxaca.blogspot.com>>.



Food Sovereignty is the Only Solution to the Global Food Crisis

A demonstrator eats grass in front of a UN peacekeeping soldier during a protest against the high cost of living in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in April.

Georgia Miller

Mining and aluminium production company Alcoa is seeking to expand its aluminium smelter in Portland, Victoria. This project will massively increase the state's energy consumption and greenhouse emissions.

The global food crisis is not new. Although the world produces enough food to feed everyone, in recent decades gross inequities in distribution have left hundreds of millions of people hungry. Last year, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that over 850 million of the world's 6.6 billion people – 1 in 8 people – were experiencing extreme food insecurity and that the number would increase by 50 million in both 2007 and 2008.

Prices for staple foods have reached record highs over the past year. In the first quarter of 2008 alone, wheat prices increased by 130% while rice increased by 140% over 2007 prices. Price rises have had the worst impact on poor people reliant on imported food. Food riots have occurred in over 30 countries where the world's poorest people can no longer afford basic food. Twenty four people were killed in riots in Cameroon; in Haiti several people were killed and protests at food prices forced the Prime Minister to resign.

There are a number of factors for the price hikes that have exacerbated the food crisis. A leaked World Bank report says that 75% of the price hikes in food crops may be caused by competition from agrofuels (a.k.a. biofuels) grown to feed cars

in the Global North. Speculation on global markets, hoarding of food, rising fuel costs, climate change reducing production by key agricultural exporters like Australia, and more energy-intensive consumption patterns also contributed.

FoE International's Food Program

In the smelting process, electrolysis is used to split oxygen ions from aluminium oxide to create the aluminium. This process is pollutant-heavy, leading to the creation of various pollutants including gaseous hydrogen fluoride, fluoride particulates, alumina, carbon monoxide, volatile organics and sulfur dioxides. The pollution caused by fluoride and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are "especially damaging to human health in many aluminium smelters".

The urgency of the global food crisis underpinned the March 2008 meeting of Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)'s food sovereignty meeting in Indonesia. This was the first face-to-face planning meeting of the FoEI food sovereignty program (previously called the food, agriculture and GMO program), which was established in 2006 to link and provide strategic direction to FoE's work on these key issues internationally. People from 17 countries took part in the meeting, many from countries experiencing food crises.

We agreed that the long-term solution to the global food crisis lies in diversified, small-scale production where communities and regions control agriculture and food production to prioritise local food needs. We also recognised that averting climate chaos and addressing climate debt is critical to achieving sustainable farming; many communities most adversely affected by climate change have contributed the least to causing it.

Key outcomes from the meeting were agreements to:

- Resist industrial-scale, export-oriented agriculture and the expansion of large-scale monocultures, including for agrofuels. Resist corporate-led technologies like GMOs, nanotechnology and synthetic biology which promote this model of agriculture.
- Resist and transform the neo-liberal model of global trade to one based on local trade and solidarity economies. Recognise the right of local communities to determine agricultural and economic policies that support local food production to meet local food needs.
- Defend and expand small-scale, ecologically sustainable farming and diverse production and supply systems. Defend traditional farming knowledge and agricultural biodiversity.

An exciting outcome of the meeting for the FoE Australia Nanotechnology Project was the creation of a FoEI 'corporate-led technologies' working group within the food sovereignty program to campaign on technologies including nanotechnology and synthetic biology. This working group will link the activities of several FoEI member groups, and also help us raise the profile within FoEI of the threats that these technologies in food and agriculture pose to food sovereignty, health and the environment. For information about the group, please contact Georgia Miller <georgia.miller@foe.org.au>.

First-hand accounts of the food crisis

A key part of both the FoEI food sovereignty meeting, and the one day Asia Pacific food meeting that took place before it, was sharing stories from around the world. We heard first hand how neo-liberal food, energy and trade policies have caused the food crisis.

FoE campaigners from many Southern countries told of similar experiences – food production to meet the needs of local communities is struggling in the face of competition from export-oriented luxury crops and agrofuels, cropland conversion to mining, urbanisation, climate change, contaminated water and soil, aggressive multinationals pushing GMOs, forced 'structural adjustment' and removal of tariffs on imported foods in conjunction with the artificially low prices of subsidised imports or food dumped as 'aid' from the North. As food production for

local communities has declined, many countries have become more reliant on importing a large proportion of their food needs; the recent price spikes in staples like rice, corn and soy beans have left the poor struggling to afford basic food.

Philippines: Ronald Gregorio from FoE Philippines (LRC-KSK) told us how recent rice price rises of 35-40% had led to widespread shortages. He told us how the Philippine government had responded to the rice crisis by advising children under 12 not to eat rice, while some restaurants have begun offering only half serves of rice with meals. The Philippines was once a net rice exporter, but Ronald told us that rapid loss of farmland to mining, conversion of rice paddies to production of coffee, asparagus and other export goods, and WTO-enforced economic liberalisation had led to the Philippines becoming reliant on rice imports to meet a large proportion of peoples' basic food needs. This dependence on imports had left people – especially poor people – vulnerable to the recent international price hikes, with the result that many were now struggling to afford this staple food.

Indonesia: Dinar Setiawan and our other hosts from FoE Indonesia (WALHI) told us that Indonesia was also in the grip of a serious food crisis. While Indonesia now imports 60% of its soybeans, the price of soybean imports has doubled. Water resources are declining in quantity and quality, sparking the beginning of armed conflict for access to water for farming. Small farmers are being pressured into planting GMOs, while also being sued by aggressive multinational seed companies over their saving of patented seeds. Increasing fuel costs are also adding to the burden on small farmers. A serious threat to food production for local needs is the rapid conversion of farming land to agrofuels production, especially palm oil which is sold to Europe as a 'sustainable' biofuel.

Nepal: Babu Poudel from FoE Nepal (Pro Public) described the dire food crisis gripping Nepal, where malnutrition is the biggest cause of child mortality. Around 40% of Nepal's population relies on subsistence farming using less than one hectare of land per family. Nepalese farming is traditionally rain fed, with no irrigation. Climate change has led to reduced overall rainfall and has also caused more frequent extreme flooding events which wash away precious topsoil. Land fragmentation is also a key issue. Nepal has a diverse topography, ranging from 60m to 4,800m. But while the land is more fertile and better suited to food production in the lower floodplains, there is no reliable means of transport to other areas. There is also a serious concern about toxic contamination of imported foods being sold in Nepal; Pro Public recently took legal action for the recall of contaminated food and is also trying to monitor the importing of unlabelled GM food.

Africa: Nnimmo Bassey from FoE Nigeria (ERA) stressed that although the food crisis is now most severe in Africa, until recent decades there was little hunger in Africa; traditional farming techniques successfully met the needs of local communities. Africa has been hard hit by climate change, experiencing drought and desertification. Large-scale violent conflict, often over extractive industries, has also had a heavy toll on agriculture. The structural adjustment measures demanded in recent decades by international financial institutions have played a large role in causing the current food crises. The forced slashing or removal of tariffs has left local farmers struggling to compete with the huge growth in imports of cheap, subsidised food produced in Europe or the US. Food dumped by the North as 'aid', including GMO or contaminated food, distorts local markets and poses health and environment risks.

Nnimmo emphasised that more than 80% of the food produced in Africa is produced by small farmers, and that safeguarding and strengthening these farmers and traditional food systems is pivotal to rebuilding food sovereignty in Africa. For this reason, African FoE groups are campaigning against GMOs, against agrofuels production for the North, and against multinationals and 'philanthropic' bodies promoting an African 'green revolution' – all of which will undermine traditional small-scale farming and increase corporate control of food systems.

Uruguay: Karin Nansen from FoE Uruguay (REDES) and other FoE members from ATALC (Latin America and the Caribbean) told how structural adjustment programs, free trade agreements and liberalisation have left many Latin American countries reliant on food imports, whereas others have surpluses which they are dumping rather than selling at reduced prices. Small farmers have lost control of land to large agribusiness operators who aggressively promote the large-scale production of monoculture crops for export, in place of traditional diverse food production for local communities. Rainforest logging and farmland conversion to large-scale agrofuels production is also a big problem. Local communities are organising to resist the growth of industrial-scale monocultures, to defend traditional peasant and Indigenous farming and seed heritage, and to resist GMOs and other technologies that promote monopoly control of food systems.

More information:

- * Civil Society statement on the World Food Emergency, <www.nyeleni.eu/foodemergency>.
- * Nnimmo Bassey, FoE Nigeria (ERA), "A Tsunami that was never silent: Africa, the Food Crisis and Food Aid", <www.eration.org/index.php?option=com_reports>.
- * FoE Africa statement, <www.eration.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=126&Itemid=1>.
- * FoE England, Wales, Northern Ireland, "Solving the global food crisis", <www.foe.co.uk/resource/media_briefing/food_crisis.pdf>.



Food riot in Haiti



Food riot in Haiti



Food riot in India.



Nyeléni Forum for Food Sovereignty, 2007



The Californian Experience: Lessons for Australia on Climate Action

Murray Hogarth

In troubled times it's easy to get attracted to naive or self-serving notions of silver-bullet solutions to big problems. So it's worth asking questions like: Are we investing the advent of a regulated carbon market with miracle cure status? Is this a trap in the making? And is this any time to be hooking our hopes to market-based mechanisms anyway?

We also should ask if there's a better path we can take? My answer to that is yes and no, depending on what timeframe we are dealing with. Achieving an effective global carbon market appears to be a very long-term proposition, and even a workable national one will take time and effort.

In the short-term, however, we could be putting a national energy efficiency target ahead of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), instead of behind it. Energy-lazy Australia is awash with low, zero and negative-cost energy saving opportunities across the residential, commercial and industrial sectors. Energy efficiency can more than pay its own way, putting savings in the pockets of ordinary Australians and margin-hungry businesses alike, and doing so regardless of what action other countries decide to take on cutting carbon emissions.

There's a major economy on the other side of the Pacific Ocean from Australia that's been proving the economic and societal value of energy efficiency for over three decades. It's the pseudo nation-state of California, which switched on to energy efficiency during the oil shocks of the 1970s and never diverted from it. California's maturity on energy and environmental action is a beacon for those who seek

meaningful action, and it shows up Australia's immaturity. We'll return to the California equation shortly.

I've always argued in favour of carbon trading using both compliance and voluntary markets as part of a suite of actions to address the clear and present danger of runaway climate change. But as a veteran of early business action under the world's oldest mandated emission trading regime, the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme (GGAS) that began in NSW in 2003, I also know first hand that new, some might say experimental markets can be dangerous places. In the GGAS price collapse of 2007, businesses failed, investment strategies took a hiding and jobs were lost. The European Union's pioneering cap-and-trade scheme also has had big teething problems, offering further proof of a simple proposition that creating whole new markets is hard work, with pitfalls, and takes time.

In a perfect world, and given 5-10 years to get established, and assuming major advances in international cooperation, trading can achieve great things. But the world's far from perfect and right now it's seriously messy. Nor can we afford to wait too long to iron out market and/or policy imperfections likely to make any carbon trading system a slow starter in terms of its early emission reductions.

Current international financial markets crises aside, our problems don't get much bigger or more urgent than global warming. It's not surprising, therefore, that we've seen a tendency in Australia for the more starry-eyed carbon market champions to hold up a national emissions trading scheme as the fix-all for meaningful action on climate change.

California

There's a bit of mystique surrounding carbon trading in Australia. This is in part a legacy of the long struggle with the previous Australian Government, under then Prime Minister John Howard and his Liberal-National Coalition, to get carbon pricing (whether through a tax or trading) on to the national agenda at all. For most of his tenure Howard would have none of it. A whole activist agenda built up around pushing the case for carbon trading, which was ironic having predominantly pro-regulatory forces arguing for a market solution while the avowedly pro-market advocates opposed it.

This is where we go back to California. Like Australia, California accounts for a bit over 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, although it has nearly double Australia's population and a bigger economy. Also like Australia, California is on track to introduce a cap-and-trade scheme for reducing these emissions in the next few years, Australia in 2010 and California in 2012. There, however, the similarities come to an end.

Far from seeing a trading scheme as the Holy Grail of carbon action, for the Californians it is one useful weapon to add to an already bulging arsenal aimed at climate and other environmental action. It's an arsenal they've been building since clean air became a big policy driver in the 1970s, driven by the foul toxicity of Los Angeles' smog clouds, and reinforced in terms of an energy efficiency imperative by the oil shocks of that era. It's a story of achievement, where Australia's is still one of relative inaction.

Earlier this year, an expert on California's environment and climate experience visited Australia. Professor Michael Hanemann of the University of California, Berkeley, is no international academic superstar, but he's a veteran student of and keen contributor to the Californian experience that is now in its fourth decade.

Hanemann credits California with having a unique history within the US with regard to two key areas of environmental policy. These are areas with major relevance to carbon emission reductions – controlling air pollution from motor vehicles and regulating energy efficiency.

"In both cases," says Hanemann, "California pioneered regulatory approaches that were later copied by the federal government and applied to other states. This experience has provided the foundation for California's new greenhouse gas initiative."

The vehicle air pollution focus has seen very real and major reductions in smog over three decades, in spite of massive growth in the Californian economy and vehicle miles travelled. Total air pollutants are down from 55,000 US tons a day in 1975 to about 20,000 tons now, although population is up from 25 million to over 36 million, and vehicle miles travelled rose from 389 million miles per day in 1980 to 873 million in 2005.

Of course Australia, operating in the slipstream of Californian and European leadership on vehicle emissions, has done a lot to clean up vehicle-related air pollution too,

and its energy efficiency where the comparison is most impressive.

The energy efficiency focus has given California a remarkable 60% better performance in terms of per capita electricity consumption (7,000 kWh per annum) by comparison with the US average (12,000 kWh). The relevant number for Australia is 11,000 kWh.

So California has runs on the board that go way beyond anything Australia has done. The key to these achievements, as outlined by Hanemann, has been a "wave of regulation-induced technical change". Put bluntly, that means forcing powerful energy utilities, oil companies and big manufacturers like the auto companies and appliance makers to clean up their act if they want to trade in California, which is given to behaving more like a nation in its own right than a mere state of the union. Where necessary, California has gone to the courts to push its agenda, taking on vested interests and winning some key battles.

The California experience tells us important things. Targeted regulation can deliver massive environmental gains with broad economic benefits attached, and this has already been achieved in California over decades without carbon trading. An emissions trading scheme may work too, and may underwrite the next generation of emission reductions, but such a scheme is not the one true path for carbon reduction. It's no fix-all, and there are sound reasons to question how much it will achieve at all in the short term.

At the very least, Australia needs to step up rather than scale down its focus on so-called complementary measures including energy efficiency, renewable energy, investment in clean-tech R&D, and also voluntary carbon trading. The Rudd Government has its 20% by 2020 renewable energy target in the policy production line, and that is to be commended. Energy efficiency is crying out for similarly ambitious targeting at a national level, taking a cue from the more progressive states like NSW, Victoria and South Australia, and perhaps even a trading scheme of its own!

Even Professor Ross Garnaut, who has shown himself to be a staunch advocate of emissions trading as the central policy focus for Australia – as long as it has sound architecture and isn't compromised by pandering to vested interests – holds fears if we get the CPRS wrong. From early on in his climate change review, Garnaut conceded that the simpler measure of a carbon tax would be preferable to a badly-designed emissions trading scheme.

The message is clear. We have to hedge our bets on the CPRS. A well-designed scheme can be a winner over time, but California is a winner already using approaches it pioneered in the 1970s before global warming was even the issue. Proven performance is worth learning everything about and following when there is so much at stake.

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JURISDICTION/ ISSUE	California	Australia	US
Greenhouse gas emissions in millions of tonnes of CO₂-e (approx.)	490	560	7,200
2020 emission reduction target	Back to 1990 baseline	To be set in 2009	Nil
2050 emission reduction target	80% below 1990 baseline	60% below 2000 baseline	Nil
Cap-and-trade emissions reduction scheme status	Introduction in 2009 with 8 other states as part of the Western Climate Initiative	Introduction in 2010 according to the government's current timetable	No current commitment but likely under new US Administration after January 2009
Energy supply profile	Net energy importer. Heavily dependent on imported energy for both stationary (coal-fired electricity, natural gas) and transport (oil).	Net energy exporter. Relies overwhelmingly on domestic energy resources for stationary, but increasingly dependent on imported oil for transport.	Net energy importer, with heavy dependence on imported oil for transport, and increasingly natural gas, but massive indigenous coal reserves.
Per capita electricity use in MWh	7	11	12
GDP (2007)	US\$1.7 trillion	US\$0.9 trillion	US\$13.8 trillion
Renewable energy target	20% by 2010 33% by 2020	20% by 2020	Nil

Will Capitalism Survive Climate Change?

Walden Bello

There is now a solid consensus in the scientific community that if the change in global mean temperature in the twenty-first century exceeds 2.4 degrees Celsius, changes in the planet's climate will be large-scale, irreversible, and disastrous. Moreover, the window of opportunity for action that will make a difference is narrow – that is, the next 10 to 15 years.

Throughout the North, however, there is strong resistance to changing the systems of consumption and production that have created the problem in the first place and a preference for techno-fixes such as 'clean' coal, carbon sequestration and storage, industrial-scale biofuels, and nuclear energy.

Globally, transnational corporations and other private actors resist government-imposed measures such as mandatory caps, preferring to use market mechanisms like the buying and selling of 'carbon credits', which critics say simply amounts to a licence for corporate polluters to keep on polluting.

In the South, there is little willingness on the part of Southern elites to depart from the high-growth, high-consumption model inherited from the North, and a self-interested conviction that the North must first adjust and bear the brunt of adjustment before the South takes any serious step towards limiting its greenhouse gas emissions.

Contours of the Challenge

In climate change discussions, the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility' is recognised by all parties, meaning that the global North must shoulder the brunt of the adjustment to the climate crisis since it is the one whose economic trajectory has brought it about. It is also recognised that the global response should not compromise

the right to develop of the countries of the global South.

The devil, however, is in the detail. As Martin Khor of the Third World Network has pointed out, the global reduction of 80% in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2050 that many now recognise as necessary, will have to translate into reductions of at least 150-200% on the part of the global North if the two principles – common but differentiated responsibility, and recognition of the right to development of the countries of the South – are to be followed. But are the governments and people of the North prepared to make such commitments?

Psychologically and politically, it is doubtful that the North at this point has what it takes to meet the problem head-on. The prevailing assumption is that the affluent societies can take on commitments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions but still grow and enjoy their high standards of living if they shift to non-fossil fuel energy sources. Moreover, how the mandatory cuts agreed multilaterally by governments get implemented within the country must be market-based, that is, on the trading of emission permits. The subtext is: techno-fixes and the carbon market will make the transition relatively painless and – why not? – profitable, too.

There is, however, a growing realisation that many of these technologies are decades away from viable use and that, in the short and medium term, relying on a shift in energy dependence to non-fossil fuel alternatives will not be able to support current rates of economic growth. Also, it is increasingly evident that the trade-off for more cropland being devoted to biofuel production is less land to grow food and greater food insecurity globally.

It is rapidly becoming clear that the dominant paradigm of economic growth is one of the most significant obstacles to a serious global effort to deal with climate change. But

this destabilising, fundamentalist growth-consumption paradigm is itself more effect rather than cause.

The central problem, it is becoming increasingly clear, is a mode of production whose main dynamic is the transformation of living nature into dead commodities, creating tremendous waste in the process. The driver of this process is consumption – or more appropriately overconsumption – and the motivation is profit or capital accumulation: Capitalism, in short.

It has been the generalisation of this mode of production in the North and its spread from the North to the South over the past 300 years that has caused the accelerated burning of fossil fuels like coal and oil and rapid deforestation, two of the key man-made processes behind global warming.

The South's Dilemma

One way of viewing global warning is to see it as a key manifestation of the latest stage of a wrenching historical process: the privatisation of the global commons by capital. The climate crisis must thus be seen as the expropriation by the advanced capitalist societies of the ecological space of less developed or marginalised societies.

This leads us to the dilemma of the South. Before the full extent of the ecological destabilisation brought about by capitalism, it was expected that the South would simply follow the 'stages of growth' of the North. Now it is impossible to do so without bringing about ecological Armageddon. Already, China is on track to overtake the US as the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, and yet the elite of China as well as those of India and other rapidly developing countries are intent on reproducing the US-type overconsumption-driven capitalism.

Thus, for the South, the implications of an effective global response to global warming include not just the inclusion of some countries in a regime of mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, although this is critical: in the current round of climate negotiations, for instance, China, can no longer opt out of a mandatory regime on the ground that it is a developing country.

Nor can the challenge to most of the other developing countries be limited to that of getting the North to transfer technology to mitigate global warming and provide funds to assist them in adapting to it, as many of them appeared to think during the Bali negotiations.

These steps are important, but they should be seen as but the initial steps in a broader, global reorientation of the paradigm for achieving economic well being. While the adjustment will need to be much, much greater and faster in the North, the adjustment for the South will essentially be the same: a break with the high-growth, high-consumption model in favor of another model of achieving the common welfare

In contrast to the Northern elites' strategy of trying

to decouple growth from energy use, a progressive comprehensive climate strategy in both the North and the South must be to reduce growth and energy use while raising the quality of life of the broad masses of people. Among other things, this will mean placing economic justice and equality at the centre of the new paradigm.

The transition must be one not only from a fossil-fuel based economy but also from an overconsumption-driven economy. The end-goal must be adoption of a low-consumption, low-growth, high-equity development model that results in an improvement in people's welfare, a better quality of life for all, and greater democratic control of production.

It is unlikely that the elites of the North and the South will agree to such a comprehensive response. The farthest they are likely to go is for techno-fixes and a market-based cap-and-trade system. Growth will be sacrosanct, as will the system of global capitalism.

Yet, confronted with the Apocalypse, humanity cannot self-destruct. It may be a difficult road, but we can be sure that the vast majority will not commit social and ecological suicide to enable the minority to preserve their privileges. However it is achieved, a thorough reorganisation of production, consumption, and distribution will be the end result of humanity's response to the climate emergency and the broader environmental crisis.

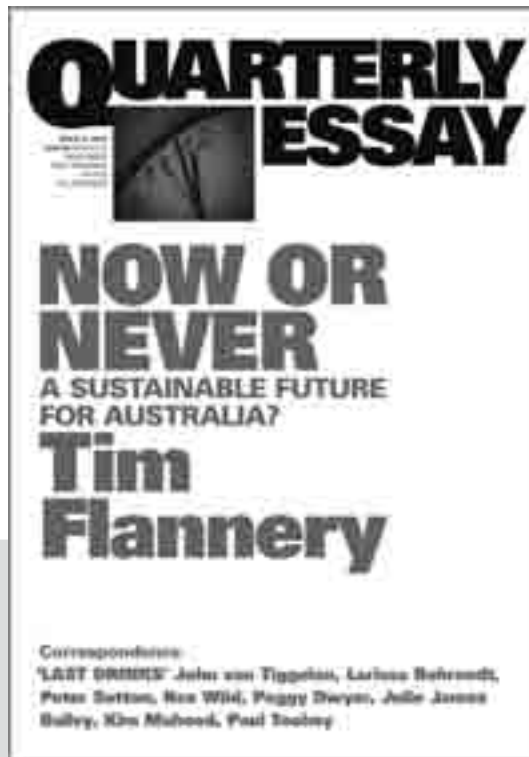
Threat and Opportunity

In this regard, climate change is both a threat and an opportunity to bring about the long postponed social and economic reforms that had been derailed or sabotaged in previous eras by elites seeking to preserve or increase their privileges. The difference is that today the very existence of humanity and the planet depend on the institutionalisation of economic systems based not on feudal rent extraction or capital accumulation or class exploitation but on justice and equality.

The question is often asked these days if humanity will be able to get its act together to formulate an effective response to climate change. Though there is no certainty in a world filled with contingency, I am hopeful that it will. In the social and economic system that will be collectively crafted, I anticipate that there will be room for the market. However, the more interesting question is: will it have room for capitalism? Will capitalism as a system of production, consumption, and distribution survive the challenge of coming up with an effective solution to the climate crisis?

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A New Realism in the Climate Conversation



Review by David Spratt

Tim Flannery

Now or Never: A sustainable future for Australia

Quarterly Essay 31

Black Ink, 2008.

Gwynne Dyer

Climate Wars

Scribe, 2008.

“There is no real debate about how serious our predicament is,” says Tim Flannery in *Quarterly Essay 31*, nor has there been the “understanding of just how profoundly we are influencing the very Earth processes that give us life.”

Many of the real impacts of climate change are either being understated or ignored in the public. It’s a point made time and again in graphic detail in Gwynne Dyer’s *Climate Wars*: even moderate impacts will have profound consequences for nations and people who will scramble and fight by whatever means available for land and water and resources in order to survive. What happens in China when the Himalayas cease to provide dry-season

melt water, the northern monsoon fails (already occurring) and the rich delta lands and cities are destroyed by rising sea levels, especially when southern Siberia becomes an attractive proposition with warmer weather? What happens when changing climate patterns dry and desertify the subtropical band in Africa and Australia, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Asia, and from southern California across the American continent?

Flannery and Dyer draw attention to a number of alarming developments since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its last major report. These include faster than expected emission increases, earlier than expected impacts, the threat of ocean acidification and permafrost vulnerability. And both bravely canvass the aerosols dilemma (particles which are causing some global dimming and therefore cooling, but are maintained in the atmosphere only by continuing to burn fossil fuels) and the case for temporary geo-engineering.

Solutions

Both Flannery and Dyer express a fear that we may have left it too late, but Flannery in particular is determined to demonstrate in some detail that real, practical and

transformative solutions are available, many of them in rural and remote Australia.

Flannery's survey of practical solutions is both inspiring and idiosyncratic, from electric cars to reforestation. 'Revolution in the feedlot' surveys the good news stories for agriculture: carbon sequestration using biomass to produce agricultural charcoal and reclaim degraded soils using holistic management practices; reducing methane emissions; and eliminating the need for fertilisers that produce the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide.

Geothermal ('hot rocks') technology gets a big rap, which is fair enough since it has great potential in Australia to be a low-cost source of power around the clock, and Flannery sketches a vision of Geothermia, a new Australian outback city using hot rocks to power energy-intensive mineral industries including aluminium. But solar thermal receives little attention even though the world's leading researcher, Australian David Mills, says that it "can be the big gorilla on the grid. As long as it has storage, and storage is the key, we can supply over 90 per cent of Australia's generation from this source on a continuing basis with no fuel."

Flannery is less convincing in his case for pouring large amounts of resources into so-called 'clean coal' research, swayed by the large amount of installed coal generating capacity. He glosses over serious limitations – there is no convincing evidence that it can be a zero emissions technology at scale, that it will be available within the necessary time frame, or that transport and storage at scale are safe and economically viable. Retrofitting the technology to existing power generators is very expensive and inefficient, and increases generating costs by up to half.

The indications are that with increasing efficiencies and larger scale, zero-emissions renewable technologies such as geo- and solar thermal will be cheaper than 'clean coal' generators, so why retrofit existing coal plants if the long-term cost equation doesn't add up?

Dyer says in his introduction that he has already concluded that "maybe if we had gotten serious about climate change fifteen years ago, or even ten, we might have had a chance, but now it's too late". Thus a gloomy and unwarranted inevitability pervades an otherwise engaging book. It's odd, because Dyer equivocates about his prognosis through the book, sometimes hoping that sufficient, rapid action is still possible, before again dismissing the possibility.

It is ironic that while governments by-and-large remain in denial, their militaries have for many years been running global warming and security scenarios and thinking about the likelihood and consequences of climate wars, as Dyer describes in his opening chapter. Dyer paints a world of failed and drowning states and cities, and masses of refugees, pitted against diminishing supplies of water, arable land, energy and food.

Global cooperation will be no match for a rising tide of nationalism. Already an international security battle is being waged for the energy resources beneath the Arctic

ocean that will become accessible once the eight million square kilometres of sea-ice that once covered the region in summer reaches its now inevitable, final destruction. Global food prices have doubled in the past 18 months, mostly as the direct and indirect consequences of climate change, including drought, changing monsoon and precipitation patterns, and the diversion of food crops to biofuels. And there will be climate wars over water, too.

Middle of the Road Messages

One reason for the public blindness to the really big impacts of global warming can be found in the strategic decisions of most of the large environment groups to sell a soft, "middle of the road" message – and advocating actions that even if fully implemented would not avert a climate catastrophe – because they judge the bitter truth is too much for the public or politicians to bear.

But this '*be worried, but not too worried, we've got solutions!*' story is starting to fray. Flannery and Dyer would surely agree because they are painfully aware of the brutal conclusions to be drawn from the current global warming observations and research.

Sir Nicholas Stern said that climate impacts were likely to be greater than the two world wars and the Depression put together, and that's on the light side. When profligacy wrecked the global finance markets in 2008, governments and central banks readily stumped up more than one trillion dollars to 'bail out' the economy. But when profligate human carbon emissions threaten the planet, such a rescue plan is not even the subject of serious conversation.

Perhaps it is too late, but even Gwynne Dyer may take solace in the thought that when global capital, at whose behest most governments rule, understand the new climate realism and conclude that they can't build an economy on a dying planet, then those who have sat on their hands at the global negotiating tables will miraculously find the political will to plan and build a zero-emissions economy at great speed.

David Spratt is co-author of "Climate Code Red: the case for emergency action" (Scribe, 2008). <www.climatecodered.net>, <dspratt@bigpond.net.au>. A longer version of this article will be published in the December 2008 edition of Dissent.

Offsetting Democracy

Kevin Smith

Carbon trading and offsets distract attention from the wider, systemic changes and collective political action that needs to be taken in the transition to a low-carbon economy. Promoting more effective and empowering approaches to climate change involves moving away from the blinkered reductionism of free-market dogma, the false-economy of supposed quick fixes, the short-term self interest of big business.

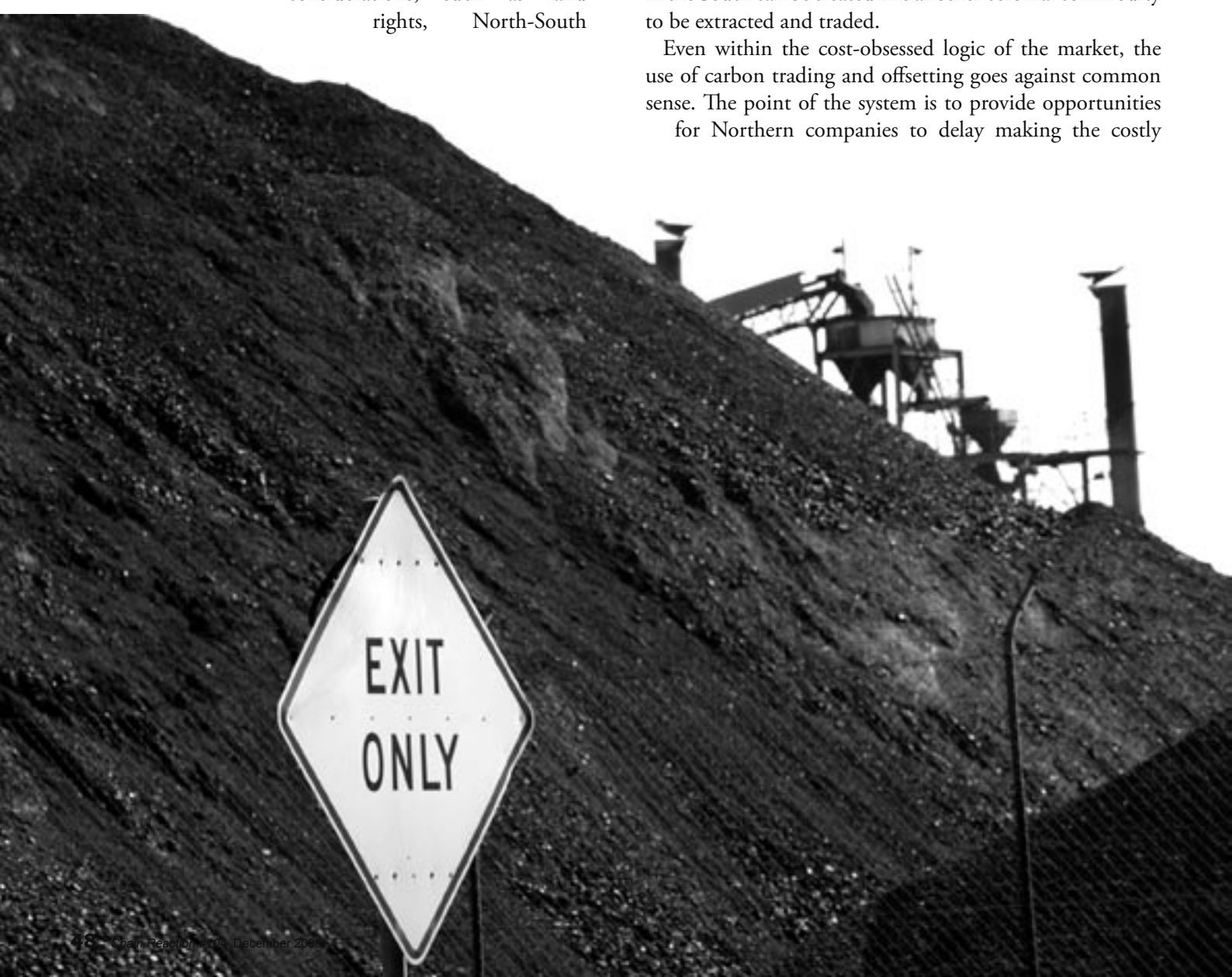
The concept that underpins the whole system of carbon trading and offsetting is that a tonne of carbon here is exactly the same as a tonne of carbon there. That is, if its cheaper to reduce emissions in India than it is in the UK, then you can achieve the same climate benefit in a more cost-effective manner by making the reduction in India.

But the seductive simplicity of this concept is based on collapsing a whole series of important considerations, such as land rights, North-South

inequalities, local struggles, corporate power and colonial history, into the single question of cost-effectiveness. The mechanisms of emissions trading and offsetting represent a reductionist approach to climate change that negates complex variables in favour of cost-effectiveness.

So when the Dutch FACE Foundation plants trees in Kibale national park in Uganda to offset consumer flights, it ignores the fact that the land has been the site of violent evictions in the recent past and is still hotly contested by the people who once lived there. When companies buy carbon credits in the EU Emissions Trading scheme, the cheapness of the supposed emissions reductions is all that is important. But any offsetting in Southern countries to justify emissions in Northern countries completely bypasses the issue of the extreme disparity in the levels of per capita carbon consumption and assumes that emissions reductions in the South can be treated like another colonial commodity to be extracted and traded.

Even within the cost-obsessed logic of the market, the use of carbon trading and offsetting goes against common sense. The point of the system is to provide opportunities for Northern companies to delay making the costly



transition to low-carbon technologies. This is indeed 'cost effective' in the short term, as it's easier and cheaper to buy carbon credits rather than go about the complicated business of making those changes, but studies have shown time and again that the longer we delay making those changes, the more expensive and difficult it will be, in terms of society enmeshing itself even further in the web of fossil-fuel dependency, and of even more costly adaptation to the exacerbated impacts of climate change.

There has already been some documentation of how offsetting can be used by countries to avoid taking responsibility for meeting their Kyoto targets, and how fundamentally unsustainable companies like Land Rover, BP and BA can use offsets in an attempt to garner undeserved environmental legitimacy. What is more disturbing are the new ways in which offsets are being creatively applied by the corporate sector.

Coca Cola and Water Offsets

The corrosive influence of offsets illogic is now not even restricted to the sphere of climate change and carbon emissions. Coca Cola has been the subject of sustained campaigns by social justice groups all over the world, but its business practices in India have received particular attention. In 2003, the Delhi-based Centre for Science and the Environment issued a report on laboratory tests that showed pesticide and insecticide levels of 11-70 times the maximum set by the European Union for drinking water, in a number of soft drinks being sold by Coca Cola in India. The US-based India Resource Centre has made numerous allegations against the company, saying that it causes severe water shortages for local communities, and that its bottling facilities pollute the surrounding soil and groundwater. In March 2004, officials in Kerala, a state in Southern India, shut down one of Coca Cola's bottling plants over claims by local communities and activists that it had drained and polluted local water supplies.

In August 2007, while he sipped a can of Diet Coke in front of the distinctive World Wildlife Fund (WWF) panda logo, the CEO of Coca Cola, Neville Isdell, announced a \$20 million dollar partnership with WWF that would aim to "replace every drop of water we use in our beverages and their production." Aside from plans to reduce and recycle the water being used, the third component of the package was to replenish. This replenishment wouldn't be taking place at the sites of the water depletion, but through a series of projects taking place in other parts of the world – effectively water offsets.

This US\$20 million sum (which represents less than 1% of Coca Cola's enormous US\$2.4 billion annual advertising budget) is being used to counteract the huge amount of negative publicity that Coca Cola has received through its practices of water depletion and pollution in countries like India. The company has maintained a vigorous campaign

of denial of responsibility for any of the devastating impacts that such communities have suffered, so by using water offsets, it can play the corporate good guy in other parts of the world without having to even acknowledge the damage it has caused elsewhere.

The potential for water offsets isn't limited to just individual acts of corporate greenwash. Some commentators, like John Regan, a carbon credit supplier on the Chicago Climate Exchange, sees Coca Cola's water offset scheme as "an encouraging sign of the nascent need for a water-credit trading scheme." The idea is that if one company didn't control its water pollution sufficiently, it would have to purchase credits from another company that had controlled its water pollution beyond its target.

Like carbon trading, such a scheme would provide ample opportunity for obscure accountancy procedures and the flurry of market activity to give the impression of activity and mask the fact that very little happens in reality to address the fundamental issues of environmental degradation and social injustice.

Offsetting Democracy

Many other schemes to commodify and trade away environmental problems have been proposed or are in development, including landfill trading, endangered species trading and wetlands banking. The irony is that it is the perpetual expansion of market economies that has created such pressure on natural resources and threatened all manner of ecosystems with the soaring levels of industrial pollution. Now, those same market forces are being put forward as the panacea to our multiple environmental ills. This commodification agenda has little to do with public interest – it's more about the opportunities for businesses to capitalise on the transactions of such new markets. What is claimed to be a cheaper solution for industry to meet environmental standards transforms a political and social issue into a market issue, thus offsetting democracy.

If we are to properly grapple with the issue of climate change, we need to develop and apply a systemic analysis that goes beyond the fixation with cost or even carbon dioxide, and promote synergies with other important struggles in the areas of trade, finance, human rights, biodiversity, environmental justice and democracy.

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MUKWANO
Supporting health care in organic farming
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PEDAL AUSTRALIA FOR CLEAN ENERGY (PACE)
<www.pedalaustralia.org.au>

REVERSE GARBAGE
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RIDE PLANE EARTH
<http://rideplanetearth.org>

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY NOW (Perth)
<contact@sen.asn.au>
<www.sen.asn.au>

WEST MALLEE PROTECTION (SA)
Cat Beaton 0434 257 359
Breony Carbines 0423 910 492
Cat Beaton 0434 257 359
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The People's Blockade of the World's Biggest Coal Port

Saturday 14 March 2009

Newcastle Harbour





OUR CLIMATE. OUR FUTURE. OUR SUMMIT.

**Australia's Climate Action Summit,
Jan 31- Feb 3, 2009 Canberra, Australia.**

JOIN HUNDREDS OF MEMBERS of the grassroots climate movement from across Australia for three days of campaign and strategy, workshops and movement building in the nation's capital.

MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT by joining in the peaceful community action at Parliament on first sitting day, Tuesday 3rd February. Together we will show the Australian government that the people of Australia demand immediate action to avoid catastrophic climate change.

TAKE PART IN THE lobbying blitz on Federal MPs.

THE SUMMIT IS OUR CHANCE to unite the climate movement and strategically plan for the coming year. Now is the time to work together! It's time for the people to set the government's climate agenda.

Saturday 31 Jan - Sunday 1 Feb - Climate Summit: dual program for community climate action groups and others concerned about climate change

Monday 2 Feb - Day of skillsharing and networking workshops for community climate campaigners

Tuesday 3 Feb - Day of community action and launch of our national campaign for a safe climate.

To register or for more information go to www.climatesummit.org.au