

chain reaction

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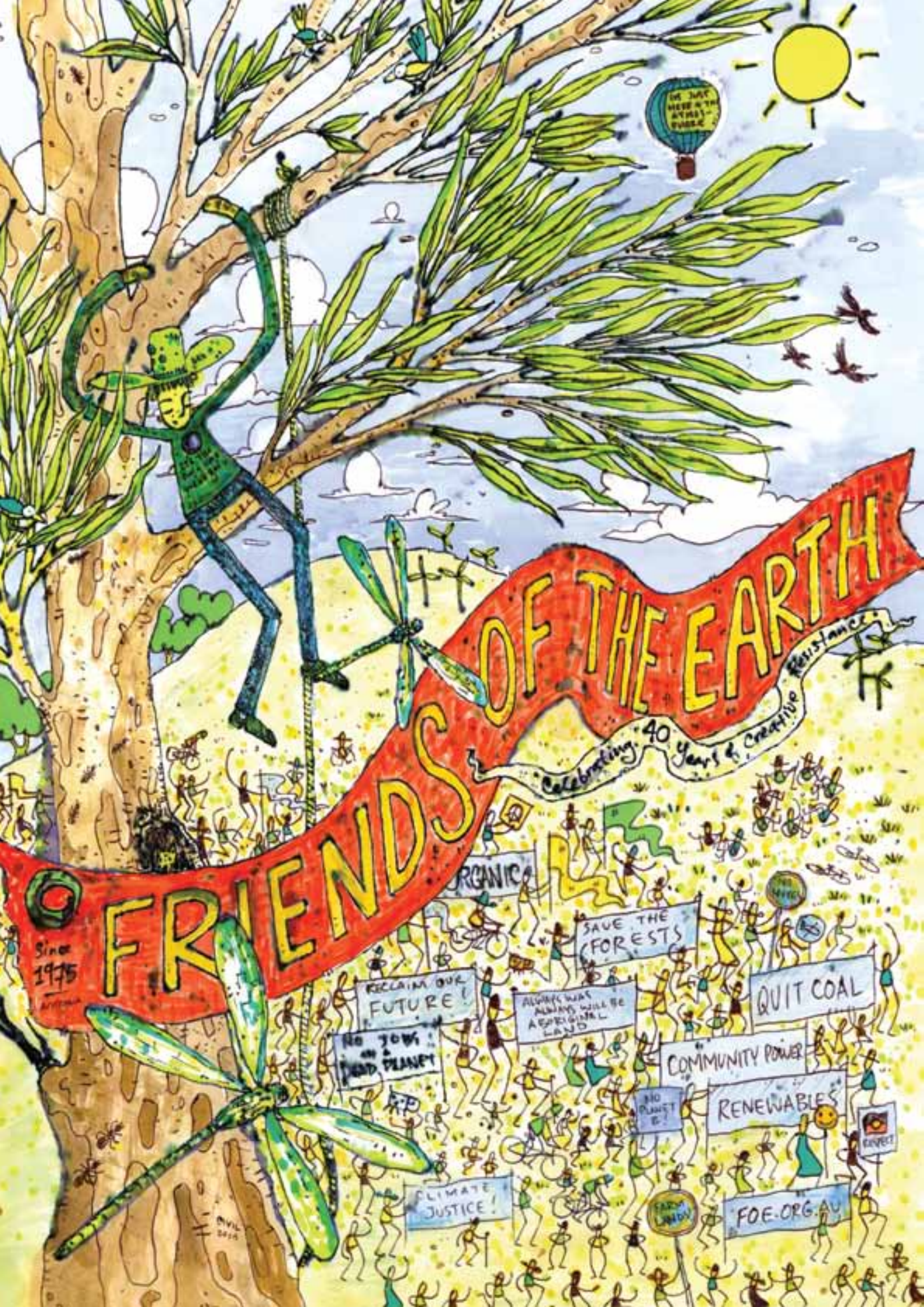
Friends of the Earth Australia **40 YEARS YOUNG**



• Untested geoengineering technologies • SA Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission

• Dayak people of Borneo take on BHP • Indigenous Protected Areas under threat

• Reflections on G20 • The Bat Attack at Leard State Forest • Big energy hates renewables



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Front cover

Protest against bauxite mining,
south-west WA, early 1970s.

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Australians leading the charge for a nuclear weapons-free world

Aboriginal nuclear test survivor Sue Coleman-Haseldine spoke to delegates from over 150 governments at the Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna on 8-9 December 2014. A Kokatha-Mula woman from Ceduna in South Australia, Coleman-Haseldine was about three years old when the British nuclear weapons tests took place at Maralinga. She told delegates that the British and Australian governments chose to conduct the tests at Maralinga and Emu Fields because they didn't believe that the land was valuable.

"There are lots of different Aboriginal groups in Australia. For all of us our land is the basis of our culture. It is our supermarket for our food, our pharmacy for our medicine, our school and our church. These tests contaminated a huge area and everything in it but people hundreds of kilometres away were also impacted ... I noticed people dying of cancer, something that was new to us," Coleman-Haseldine told the conference.

While the British and Australian governments did not acknowledge Sue Coleman-Haseldine's testimony at the conference, 44 states called for a prohibition of nuclear weapons due to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

The Pope also sent a statement that was delivered at the conference, which declared his position that a ban on nuclear weapons is both necessary and possible. "I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home," Pope Francis said.

The Australian government continues to rely on the nuclear weapons of the United States in its security doctrine, despite half-hearted statements mentioning the ultimate goal of a nuclear weapons-free world.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) – a powerful international movement with its origins in Australia – played a leading role at the conference, as well as at previous conferences on the same topic held in Mexico earlier this year and Norway last year. Prior to the Vienna conference, ICAN Australia wrote an open letter to the Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop on behalf of more than 30 peace, health, humanitarian, union, Aboriginal, student and environmental organisations in Australia. The letter urged the Australian Government to support the commencement of negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons, to commission research into the impact of a nuclear winter on agriculture in



Sue Coleman-Haseldine (front right) pictured with Marcina Coleman-Richards.

Australia, and to establish a defence posture that does not rely on US extended nuclear deterrence. More than 100 Australian parliamentarians have signed ICAN's global appeal for a treaty banning nuclear weapons, and opinion polls show that well over 80% of the Australian public also support a ban.

At the conclusion of the Vienna conference, the Austrian government delivered the "Austrian pledge" in which it committed to work to "fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons" and pledged, "to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal".

Vienna carried forward the momentum for negotiations to begin on a binding international instrument to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons and South Africa has said that it is considering its role in future meetings.

As Sue Coleman-Haseldine told the Vienna conference, "If you love your own children and care for the children of the world, you will find the courage to stand up and say "enough"."

The transcript and video of Sue Coleman-Haseldine's address to the Vienna conference is posted at:

www.icanw.org/campaign-news/australia/australian-test-survivor-to-speak-in-vienna

The Bat Attack: Where hundreds made history

Helen War

At 5am one morning in February, several hundred people stirred and rose from makeshift beds, piled into a convoy of cars and headed into the night to begin another chapter of the Leard Blockade. On this Sunday morning, whilst millions of stars still covered the sky, the protests of the Bat Attack began with a giant rally and people locking themselves to machinery. What followed was an epic week-long push to hamper Whitehaven Coal's bulldozing of the Leard State Forest for the new Maules Creek coal mine – a \$767 million project that will emit approximately 30 million tonnes of CO2 per year.¹

The climate movement in Australia has been making waves in the past few years, setting an international standard for peaceful direct action in the name of fighting unsustainable new projects that will fuel climate change. There is no better example than the Leard Blockade, a fluid community which has been taking on coal mine expansion in the Leard State Forest for more than two years. Among them are activists, farmers, Indigenous traditional owners and religious leaders – hundreds of people moved to take action to stop the destruction of this beautiful, critically endangered ecological community.²

The Leard Blockade was started in the Leard State Forest by Jonathan Moylan and Murray Drecshler in 2012, and moved around to multiple sites. And so, nestled in the hills of Maules Creek, a new satellite camp called “Kashmir” became host to the Bat Attack protestival from February

13–18, where skill-shares, poetry and music sang out alongside waves of protest and arrests.

Maules Creek is a community that has seen first-hand one of the most intense and enduring climate battles in Australia due to its proximity to Whitehaven Coal's new mine, with local farmer Cliff Wallace hosting the chaotic Frontline Action on Coal camp for over a year on his farm “Wando”. It saw convergences of several hundred people at a time, with a steady flow of willing participants eager to intervene in the mine's construction. Despite weathering health issues and harassment from the local Narrabri Shire council, Wallace has become a beloved and stoic figure among the people of the blockade, who have witnessed first-hand his generosity, humour and unshakable character.

During the rally people had the chance to hear from Maules Creek local and Leard Forest Alliance spokeswoman Roslyn Druce, who spoke about the horror of living next door to a coal mine and the disastrous outcome of Whitehaven bulldozing endangered habitat. By the time the coal dust settled on February 15, the Bat Attack rally of hundreds had garnered extensive media coverage; the 12 people arrested³ had stopped clearing all day; and all of them had been processed, released, and rewarded with warm friendly smiles from the community back in camp Kashmir. By the evening, music was once again ringing out across the paddock, and once again, many heads were together to continue creative rolling resistance.



Over the following week, protests and music continued, with further road-blocks, protests, and peaceful arrests, with five people chaining themselves together with pipe locks to block access to the mine, alongside banners saying “Never Again”.

And every night for six nights, when the activists trickled into camp after a long, hot day of direct action, the musicians kicked off and played through the night. It was a sight for inspiration, an experience unlike any other. Among the throngs of people, more than 60 acts and performers funded the journey to the blockade out of their own pocket from across the country.

At one point, drone guitar was the soundtrack whilst activists gathered together, discussing important details for the following day’s protest. Skill-shares played out in one tent as people discussed the importance of Grassy White Box Woodland habitat in another. It was this magical combination that made Bat Attack special. In alignment with the Frontline Action on Coal creed of peaceful civil disobedience, creative resistance was seeded with generous and extensive support from a multitude of national artists, locals, poets, sound technicians, and enthusiasts. All working together to fight destructive coal mine expansion that has already destroyed a number of Indigenous heritage sites of great cultural significance.⁴

In the past 12 months, among the 350 people arrested are notable individuals including fifth-generation farmer Rick Laird, whose name was given to the Leard State Forest (with an eventual variation on spelling)⁵; former Wallabies captain David Pocock; Golden Guitar winner Luke O’Shea; and Maules Creek local Anne-Marie Rasmussen, who climbed into and occupied a tree-sit for over seven hours during Bat Attack. Every time another farmer, local, or scientist chains themselves to forest-clearing machinery, the cries come from mining bodies to jail “extremists” and “economic vandals”.⁶



Uncle Neville Sampson, Gomeri traditional custodian.

During the week there were also vigils in solidarity with Gomeri traditional custodians, who have been refused entrance to their sacred and ceremonial sites for over 18 months. People gathered in support during Bat Attack when the Gomeri people announced their intention to submit a stop-work order under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act. It is a last-ditch attempt to save Lawlors Well, their last remaining sacred site within the mine lease that hasn’t already been destroyed by Whitehaven Coal. It was a humbling experience that cemented the solidarity from the wider community with the Gomeri people.

The Bat Attack was a celebration of defiance; a gathering of people committed to standing up and taking action for what is right, both at Maules Creek and around Australia. It was a remarkable slice of history, something to sing and dance about. From the engineers of Bat Attack radio to the citizens chained across the road, and the farmers of Maules Creek properties to the Indigenous sovereign owners, the Bat Attack was an incredible partnership of many communities.

Ten years ago it was considered folly to take on the coal industry, which was held up as one of the pillars of the wealthy Australian economy. For those who were there, Bat Attack was an empowering event demanding a smarter, sustainable future, showing the fortified resistance against destructive coal mining in Australia and the monumental change that is happening because of campaigns like the Leard Blockade.

Helen War is a Leard Forest Alliance spokesperson.

More information: www.frontlineaction.org

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Big energy hates renewables

Ben Courtice

As *Chain Reaction* goes to press, there are ongoing negotiations between the Federal Coalition and Labor over a compromise agreement on the Renewable Energy Target (RET).

Currently, the latest offer from the Coalition is to reduce the target (from 41,000 gigawatt-hours of renewable energy by 2020), to 31,000 gigawatt-hours (they had previously said 26,000 would be their preferred figure).

Labor, who have said they will take direction from the renewable energy industry, are so far holding out for a figure in “the mid to high 30s”, a level that the Clean Energy Council has suggested they could live with.

The ongoing uncertainty over the future of the target means that there is pretty much zero investment happening. Banks won't loan money for renewable projects, because no-one knows what the future will bring.

Unfortunately, if Labor does negotiate a reduced target with the Coalition, we could be in the position where a significant reduction in the target will be painted as a victory by many in the industry – because it gets the finance and construction of projects happening in the short term.

This is despite the fact that the existing, 41,000 gigawatt-hour target could still be met by new wind farms before 2020, with no reduction needed.

There have been threats from the industry that they will not be able to meet the target, and now that they will simply ignore it – a capital strike, as *RenewEconomy* editor Giles Parkinson put it. Energy giant Origin Energy has threatened to opt out of the target and instead pay the fines for not meeting it.

Perhaps these big energy companies feel they've been swindled. When the RET was initiated under the first Rudd government, it was expected that the growth in renewable energy would simply fill a part of the overall growth in energy demand.

Since 2009–10, around the same time the current RET was brought in, actual energy demand has unexpectedly fallen, every year. Big energy generators are finding that instead of adding a renewable portfolio to their productive, growing investments, the RET is seeing renewables take a growing slice of a shrinking pie.

Whatever deal is cut in parliament, there have now been several years of growing uncertainty over the RET, since Martin Ferguson was Energy Minister. There have been reviews followed by inquiries followed by an explicitly hostile federal

government, and the uncertain investment environment has certainly prevented some new wind and solar capacity being built. The only beneficiary of this has been the incumbent fossil fuel generators.

The big energy companies (Origin, Energy Australia, AGL, Alinta and others) have increasingly lobbied against the RET. The latest threat of “capital strike” by Origin is a new escalation, but it follows the pattern.

We have seen many fabricated stories about renewable energy schemes costing the bill-paying public circulated in the press. But the evidence is, in fact, that the only players who lose from building renewable energy are those with investments in big fossil-fuel power stations.

The Yes2Renewables campaign of Friends of the Earth Melbourne has for years now understood that what analysts call the “merit order effect” means that renewable energy reduces wholesale power prices in our electricity market system. Big energy companies made up to a quarter of their annual profit in a few days' peak prices during the 2009 heatwave that led up to Black Saturday. A few years later, in a comparable heatwave in 2013, peak prices were significantly lower, as millions of solar panels that had been installed in the interim kept the money in the community instead of the big energy companies' pockets.

Big energy hates renewable energy, because renewables are reducing the superprofits that the operators of huge, centralised coal power stations had become accustomed to. The behaviour of the big energy companies over recent years is a blatant corporate standover operation – albeit with willing collaboration from government.

So if a deal is stitched together, and investment resumes toward a new, lower RET target, perhaps already done and dusted by the time you are reading this – some in the industry will be quite understandably relieved. The pressure on their jobs and businesses may ease. Finance may become available to build the projects they have been sitting on for the last five years.

A deal for a reduced RET should not be seen as any kind of victory for renewable energy. It just illustrates the depths to which the fossil fuel industry will sink to maintain its stranglehold on our electricity supply – and keep its profits flowing.

Ben Courtice has at times worked for the Yes2Renewables campaign at Friends of the Earth Melbourne, Green Left Weekly, and climate solutions think-tank Beyond Zero Emissions.

Queensland's opportunity to address significant environmental threats

Andrew Picone

Queensland has a new government. For many in the community, the Newman government proved to be too much of a threat to the environment, too fast to strip away civil liberties and unwilling to listen to community concerns. For this, the Liberal National Party (LNP) paid the price at the ballot box.

The importance of the environment in the election is beyond doubt. The Great Barrier Reef, front and centre of Australia's iconic image to the world is perilously close to being listed as endangered by the World Heritage governing body, UNESCO. Dredging, coal, climate change, bleaching, run-off and pollution were all deeply concerning issues in the community and yet little was being done to address these threats.

In Townsville, the prospect of uranium mining in the Burdekin catchment contributed to three separate electorates voting out the LNP. With Labor's solid position to ban uranium mining in Queensland, they won three out of four seats in the area.

On Cape York Peninsula, a resurgence back to Labor saw Billy Gordon elected as the Member for Cook, the first Indigenous MP for the region since 1941. In another first, Leanne Enoch is the first Indigenous woman elected to Queensland's parliament and the first Indigenous Minister.

With the defeat of the LNP after only one term, we now have the opportunity to address some of the most significant threats to Queensland's environment. While returning the ban on uranium mining is a high priority, there are other areas now in need of close attention. The LNP opened up protected forest to logging, allowed grazing in national parks, fast-tracked major high carbon emitting developments and weakened environmental laws.

But how different will the Labor Party prove to be in office? In August 2014, Queensland Labor released its State Policy Platform which outlines most of its commitments. It is both broad in its scope and specific in some areas.

Broadly, there is a re-commitment to return to the principles of ecologically sustainable development - a policy the previous government explicitly rejected. In addition, climate change is acknowledged and there is a commitment to move towards a 'low emissions Queensland economy'.

There are some clear and specific statements of commitment to the environment. These include rejecting the shifting of Commonwealth environmental laws to the state, restoring

funding for volunteer dependent organisations, supporting a World Heritage nomination for Cape York with Traditional Owner consent, and repealing the LNP's pro-mining legislation on Stradbroke Island. For the first time, the Labor Party has appointed a Minister for the Reef and stated its commitment to meeting UNESCO guidelines to avoid an 'in danger' listing.

Preferences from the Greens, Independents and other minor parties helped to get Labor 44 seats. Only with the support from Independent Peter Wellington is Labor able to claim Government. From this position, Labor may be somewhat cautious in implementing the more ambitious of its policies. Despite this, the conservation movement must prosecute its case for better outcomes and greater accountability.

Andrew Picone works with the Australian Conservation Foundation in Cairns.

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Reflections on G20

Robin Taubenfeld

By initiating open meetings to discuss “community responses” to the G20, Friends of the Earth (Brisbane and Australia) took a key role in facilitating and supporting local community conversations and action around the G20 Leaders’ Summit, which took place in Brisbane in November 2014. As an organisation that is non-aligned politically; committed to social and environmental justice; part of a global network of grassroots organisations that have historically responded to the G20 and similar structures; structured enough to have basic material infrastructure and campaign credibility; and yet not afraid of protest and direct action, FoE was able to provide momentum for and help maintain community collaborations around the G20.

The Brisbane Community Action Network (BrisCAN) was one such collaboration, comprising local and international environmental, political, social justice and ecumenical groups. BrisCAN agreed to collaborate on a Peoples’ Summit and March, to respect the autonomy of groups organising within BrisCAN, and to support the Decolonisation Before Profit Program of the Brisbane Aboriginal Sovereign Embassy (BASE).

BASE coordinated a week of ceremony, rallies, marches and forums, re-establishing the Aboriginal Embassy in Musgrave Park, a block away from the G20 Summit venue, the Brisbane Convention Centre. Brisbane came to a virtual standstill as the leaders of the 19 largest economies and the EU met. The meeting itself was rather unremarkable. However, the outcomes and impacts of hosting such a meeting are worth examining.

Scare-mongering media

It is hard to fathom the repression tolerated or the level of fear generated by the state in the lead up to the G20. After a year of relentless scare-mongering media, manufactured largely by NewsCorp, the atmosphere of fear was palpable.

We were warned: the entire centre of Brisbane was to be a special security area, “the red zone”. Six thousand police officers would be on the streets at any given time. We saw front-page pictures of armed black-clad paramilitary-type police pointing guns at stereotypical “protestors”. They said ferals and anarchists were planning mayhem.

On November 8, the Saturday before the official Leaders’ Summit started, the front page of Queensland’s Murdoch tabloid, the *Courier Mail*, carried a large picture of a police officer in riot gear, with burning cars behind him, with the headline “City’s longest week under way as invasion begins”.

As the population who had not evacuated trembled, Christian social justice networks set up a “mock tax haven”, a fake luxurious beach scene in the centre of town, and the Murri community began setting up a sovereignty camp in Musgrave Park, near the G20 Summit venue. No violence to be seen.

My own picture had earlier appeared under the headline “Protestors vow to unleash hell on our streets”. At the time the photo was taken I was wearing a Martin Luther King Jr t-shirt with the words “violence is immoral”, standing with a small group of pacifists outside a warfare arms expo. The banner I was holding read “Qld government cuts funding for renewables, schools and hospitals – Sponsors arms fair”. The t-shirt, the peaceful protest and the banner were all missing from the photo.

The RACQ (motor) magazine featured a cover story about the police commissioner that illustrates the insidious nature of state-manufactured consent. A normal mom of “sports-mad” 8 and 10 year olds. She just happened to be in command of two surveillance centres specially built for the G20, at least one armoured personal carrier, a contingent of over 6 000 local and foreign police officers working alongside armed private security personnel with unprecedented police powers.

G20 planning

For Brisbane, the G20 served as a catalyst for a year of community conversations, many of them difficult, long, insightful and meaningful. Online disagreements over messaging, styles of organising, meeting management, “campaign” or action ownership, leadership, priorities of our demands/needs, discussion about race, class, gender, age, ability ... many useful conversations were had, many hopeful connections were made.

As a coordinator for BrisCAN-G20, my phone ran hot for the week of the promoted “invasion”

It is hard to fathom the repression tolerated or the level of fear generated by the state in the lead up to the G20.



- until on Saturday November 16, when the Leaders' Summit was on its way, Obama and co. were in town, and the crowd of approximately 3,000 of us marched peacefully through the streets of Brisbane carrying our unlawfully large banners (yes, there were restrictions on the size of banners!). Some of us wore masks, some ceremonial paint, a cohort of Climate Angels was followed by the dignified and graceful movement of 100 or so Falun Dafa practitioners. Into Musgrave Park we marched to be welcomed at the Brisbane Sovereign Aboriginal Embassy's Decolonisation Before Profit camp.

In the lead up to the G20, we saw the Queensland Council of Unions follow police recommendations to not allow outside groups to hold meetings in their premises, universities decide to move exam time and shut down their campuses, city office workers given training to respond to threats from "anti-capitalists" and local businesses who market themselves as funky, local community-centric spaces refuse to hire venues stating they are concerned about "appearing to be against the government".

Officeworks in Cairns, where people protested the G20 Finance Ministers Meeting, and Officeworks in Brisbane refused to print or scan G20-related material.

BrisCAN, the Aboriginal Embassy, various social justice groups, some unions and some church networks planned actions, forums, camps, marches, listening posts, street theatre, panel discussions, punk gigs, press conferences, film nights, street medic, legal and media teams, and public meetings.

Ukrainians gathered in numbers to protest or support Putin. Tibetans and their supporters

rallied in the city, Oxfam did some street theatre stunts and other groups did creative actions. Larger organisations generally stayed at arm's-length from the G20 actions, to ensure that they would not be associated with balaclava-wearing, cop-car-smashing rabble-rousers that anyone concerned about the G20 was portrayed to be. Nevertheless, some larger organisations did have a presence – an arm's-length presence – campaigning against austerity or privatisation, or for action on climate change or to save the reef or for workers' rights.

The repressive apparatus of the capitalist state

Special police powers were in place to ensure that people could be arrested for not carrying ID, or searched without suspicion, and the public had been informed that you could be in trouble for carrying "prohibited" items such as eggs, canned tomatoes, surf boards, masks or, of course, reptiles or insects.

There was no doubt that the special powers could and would impact on Brisbane's (and Cairns's) most vulnerable people. There seems to be an unspoken understanding that when events such as the G20 take place, homeless people are removed, the city is "cleaned up", and we all accept limitations on our rights to assemble.

A raft of laws had been put in place. VLAD – *Vicious, Lawless Association Disestablishment Act* (aka the Bikie Laws); the *G20 Act*; the *Out of Control Events Act* (aka the Party Powers Act); the *Brisbane City Council Public Land and Council Assets Local Law 2014*. These laws criminalise association, use of public space, poverty/homelessness and political expression. Only the *G20 Act* is no longer in place.

Karen Mathieson holds a photo of her son who died in police custody.

There seems to be an unspoken understanding that when events such as the G20 take place, homeless people are removed, the city is "cleaned up", and we all accept limitations on our rights to assemble.

While the Newman government severely cut funding for youths and the arts, state-sponsored graffiti appeared on Brisbane freeway pylons, and Queens Park – one of the few remaining spaces generally used for rallies – was turned in to a knit-bombed, kids art space and then ironically into an exclusion zone as authorities were determined to curtail protest action in town.

#Genocidal20

A highlight for me was seeing a huge 20+ metre banner that said #Genocidal20 carried through town. Another was the handing over of a statement developed out of the three-day Peoples' Summit to a trade union activist

from Turkey – the venue for the 2015 G20 – and hearing him speak about organising in his community.

I felt excitement when I saw a street medic team form; reverence when a ceremony was conducted before our biggest march; inspired when the Anonymous crew manifested a citizen journalist media space; grateful for the support of local businesses, churches and groups; inspired by people from overseas and interstate who came to Brisbane because they shared concerns about the G20; respect for First Nations people asserting – not asking for – sovereignty; and hope when I saw young people and new people taking action.

With its focus of bolstering the "growth economy," the G20 perpetuates political and economic systems based on violence and inequality. The leaders of the 20 largest global economies gathered for their own agendas – not ours. Among them, every declared nuclear weapons state – but they were not talking about disarmament. They did not gather in to pursue peace and cooperation – they found it almost impossible to even include the word "inclusive" in their concept of growth.

Structures such as the C20 (Civil Society 20), the Y20 (Youth 20), the L20 (the Labour 20) and others are officially sanctioned, select groupings that respond to, not set, the G20 agenda. Unsurprisingly, of these side-groupings the B20 – the "Business 20" – has the most access to the G20.

The lands that the G20 met on in Brisbane are the traditional lands of the Turbal and Jagera people. The G20 met on stolen land – perpetuating the colonisation of this space and reconfirming its embodiment of injustice, dispossession and inequality.

The G20 is perpetuating a system devoid of moral authority, which therefore relies on state power, and on the power of the Murdoch tabloids to manufacture a perverse narrative.

Despite the repression, the remaining surveillance centres, the draconian laws and the Murdoch media, the connections in response to the G20 are ongoing. The Newman government has been deposed, an Aboriginal woman has been elected to the Queensland parliament for the first time and women make up an unprecedented percentage of parliamentarians overall. People are feeling vigilant but cautiously hopeful.

Robin Taubenfeld is a member of Friends of the Earth, Brisbane.



Dayak people of Indonesian Borneo taking on BHP Billiton

Jennifer Natoli

The Dayak people of Indonesian Borneo have been fighting against the world's largest mining company for several years in an effort to stop a series of massive coal mines that would decimate primary rainforest, pollute water sources, displace indigenous peoples, and further jeopardise endangered orangutans. After years of protest, it appears they are gaining significant ground in their struggle.

Since the 1990s Australian mining giant BHP Billiton has held concessions to build several coal mines in Central Kalimantan. Known as the IndoMet Coal Project (ICP), the seven licensed regions are worth a reported \$1 billion and cover an area of 350,715 hectares, approximately one and a half times the size of the Australian Capital Territory. The proposed project is estimated to hold 1.27 billion metric tons of coal resources, mainly metallurgical coal used to make steel.¹

In April 2010, BHP sold 25% of the IndoMet stake to Adaro, Indonesia's largest coal producing company, for \$350 million. At the time, the two companies anticipated commercial production to commence no later than 2014.² However, the success of IndoMet was largely reliant on the construction of a massive railway needed to transport the coal for export.

The proposed railway would have spanned 425 kms and carried a \$2.8 billion price tag.³ The railway would not have been accessible to passengers between cities. Instead, its sole purpose was to transfer coal from mines near Puruk Cahu, in the north of Indonesia's Central Kalimantan province, to a port in Bangkuang. The project would have sliced through the Barito and Mahakam watershed areas which sparked concern among environmental groups.⁴

Many local residents feared the construction of the railway would further accelerate the destruction of forests and fragile ecosystems in the Heart of Borneo.⁴ The Heart of Borneo initiative was signed in 2007 by the governments of three trans-Bornean nations in an attempt to conserve 220,000 sq kms of forest across Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. This region is home to 6% of the world's biodiversity, as well as the headwaters of 14 major rivers which provide clean water to 11 million people.⁵

The Puruk Cahu-Bangkuang railway was initially drafted as part of Indonesia's Master Plan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Economic Development (MP3EI). The MP3EI was unveiled

in 2011 by previous President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono⁶, with an ambitious goal of raising gross domestic product (GDP) to \$4.5 trillion, increasing the per capita income from \$3000 to \$15,000, and elevating Indonesia into the ranks of the world's 10 largest economies by 2025.⁷

Newly elected President Joko Widodo, known colloquially as Jokowi, has expressed concern over the MP3EI program, appearing sympathetic to concerns from environmental and indigenous rights groups who argue that the development plan relies too heavily on exploiting natural resources and large-scale agricultural investments which would wreak havoc on the environment and leave countless communities vulnerable to land grabs.⁴ Andi Widjajanto, newly appointed Cabinet Secretary and arguably Jokowi's closest aide⁸, claims Jokowi will factor in environmental concerns and protecting indigenous cultures when considering infrastructure development, instead of solely focusing on economic gains.⁹

Railway

Like several other MP3EI projects, the railway can only be granted approval if financed through a public-private partnership, meaning both the government and one or more private-sector companies must contribute funding in order for construction to begin.⁴

In April 2014 a consortium led by China National Railway won the tender to develop the railway, but the project could not continue without finalisation of government regulations and financing.¹⁰ With this in mind, environmental groups in Indonesia ramped up their demands that the government withdraw funding for the railway, knowing that without a railway to transport coal the IndoMet project would come to a grinding halt.⁴

Arie Rompas, executive director of Friends of the Earth-affiliated WALHI Central Kalimantan branch, is one of leading critics of the railway and IndoMet coal project. "We are extremely conscious of how these mines will affect our communities that have depended on forest and rivers systems like the Barito Basin for their livelihoods for generations. Megaprojects risk displacing communities, impacting on their health through air and water pollution, and compromising livelihoods based on small-scale farming."¹¹

This region is home to 6% of the world's biodiversity, as well as the headwaters of 14 major rivers which provide clean water to 11 million people.

When timber and logging, oil, gas, and palm oil concessions are taken into account, 68% of the country has already been allocated for destruction.

Rompas is not overreacting. The region is home to several villages – as well as the already jeopardised orangutan, with an estimated population of between 45,000 and 69,000 – and is threatened by resource development, more commonly from palm oil production.¹²

Concerns from locals appear justified as this is not the first time the Dayak people have been promised development and growth only to be let down. Rompas claims, “In my home region we have already seen the destructive effects of resource projects. Some people have sold their communal land to the resource companies but have not seen any long-term prosperity from these mining operations.”¹³ Rompas is referring to the destructive effects of gold mining in the Barito Basin.

Speaking tour

To spread awareness of the IndoMet coal project, Arie Rompas along with other members of WALHI teamed up with Friends of the Earth Australia in November 2013 for a ten day speaking tour.¹⁴ Just one year later Rompas was back in Australia speaking at the G20 People’s Convergence Summit in Brisbane, a counter summit to the infamous G20.

Perhaps the biggest impact of his 2014 visit was the media attention he gained at the BHP Billiton annual general meeting in Adelaide. Rompas was the first to stand up and challenge BHP Billiton chair Jac Nasser. We get our food from the forest, our culture is tied to the forest. If BHP follows up with the Indomet project, we are concerned that we will lose our forest and our identity. ... My question for you is: will BHP Billiton move forward with the project if local people and the international community are against you?⁵

Nasser quickly dismissed Rompas, saying he would have Dean Della Valle, president of BHP’s global coal ventures, provide a comprehensive brief on the project. Arie claims Della Valle did not answer his questions about the railroad. They didn’t want to say if they had contributed to the project or whether they wanted to participate in it. But if you ask me, of course they want the railway.⁵

Aries summed up the BHP experience: “We are not very happy because what we want is for BHP to not go ahead with the Indomet project or any activity over there [in his home region]. But they just said that they will try and minimise the environmental impact of the mine. They wouldn’t give any guarantee as to how they would recognize the community’s rights.”⁵

Review

Whilst on the campaign trail in 2013, President Jokowi promised the railway project would be reviewed, taking into account concerns from

local communities and environmental groups. In November 2014, Deddy Priatna, the deputy head of infrastructure at Indonesia’s National Planning Body (Bappenas), formally announced the project would be placed under review.⁵

WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia seized this opportunity to have their voices heard. After a meeting between WALHI and several government officials, the Minister for National Development Planning, Adrinof Chaniago, announced on 4 December 2014 that the Central Kalimantan railway would not be incorporated into the Medium Term Development Plan for 2015–2019 and will not receive public-private partnership status or government guarantees.¹⁰

While responding to questions regarding their decision, the Ministry made its stance clear, arguing the railway is contrary to government policy which seeks to expand coal development for domestic consumption, not for export.¹⁵ The Ministry is also concerned that the project would have only benefited the mining companies, ignoring the needs of the general population.¹⁰

Arie Rompas responded to the decision: “Central Kalimantan, particularly the Murung Raya regency in the north, has a population density of 4 people per square kilometer. The proposed Central Kalimantan Railway is not needed for local people, and would be built to enable large quantities of coal to be mined and shipped to Asian markets. We welcome the decision by Mr. Chaniago to put a stop to this project. We now call on the Central Kalimantan Provincial government to put a halt to all plans to develop this railway.”¹⁰

As Indonesia’s population heads towards 300 million by 2035, the competition for land, energy and food is becoming fierce. Annual forest fires, the clearing and draining of carbon-rich peat swamps and increasing deforestation are responsible for about 75% of Indonesia’s greenhouse gas emissions. With a goal of cutting emissions by 26% below current levels by 2020, the Jokowi-Kalla administration must rein in deforestation and curb forest fires.¹

In addition, the government is faced with several difficult choices regarding already existing concessions on natural resources. At present, coal mining concessions, such as the ones held by BHP Billiton, cover 21.25 million hectares. Additionally, mining concessions of all types cover approximately 34% of the country. When timber and logging, oil, gas, and palm oil concessions are taken into account, 68% of the country has already been allocated for destruction.¹ Environmental and human rights groups will need to continue to apply pressure to ensure the administration moves forward with their best interests in mind.

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Indigenous Protected Areas under threat

Morgana Russell

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) are an untold success story of Australian conservation. IPAs are areas of Indigenous-owned land or sea where Traditional Owners have entered into an agreement with the Australian government to promote biodiversity and conserve cultural resources.

Indigenous Australians have a critical role to play in conservation of Australia's natural environment. They have thousands of years of knowledge that has been passed down about how to live at one and sustainably manage the land. Their cultural heritage is closely interconnected with the natural land around them and the protection of natural places is often vital to their cultural practices and beliefs.

Indigenous-owned land includes some of the most biodiverse and ecologically intact parts of Australia. They have the potential to sequester 82 million tonnes of CO₂, helping in the fight against climate change. IPAs are critical for Australia to meet our national and international nature conservation targets.

There are currently 60 declared IPAs that cover 48 million hectares, which make up one third of the National Conservation Reserve System and protect 5% of Australia's total land mass. The IPA program is part of the federal government's *Working on Country* program and is widely recognised as providing real social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits to local Indigenous communities.

The *Working on Country* program currently employs 680 Indigenous Rangers across 95 Australian Indigenous land and sea management groups. The positive health impacts of Aboriginal land management in one community were estimated at \$270,000 annually. Research says that 85% of IPAs report that their activities improve early school engagement in their communities.

The average federal government support available to IPAs is about \$0.50 per hectare for operating expenses. IPAs are a cost-effective management scheme for Australia's environment, while also benefiting Indigenous communities and culture. They are vital for managing our environment sustainably into the future and they need adequate, long-term secure funding.

From 2014, there is no funding available to establish new IPAs, and funding for existing IPAs is only guaranteed until 2018. The IPA estate, its biodiversity and the Indigenous livelihoods it supports face major threats from climate change, invasive species, changed fire regimes, pollution, overgrazing, erosion and funding insecurity. Friends of the Earth Australia support the creation of new IPAs and increased and long-term funding to Traditional Owners who are managing and protecting vast areas of Australia's precious environment.

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US National Academy of Sciences backs untested geoengineering technologies

Jeremy Tager

What would a sane society say about a corporatised society that brings the planet to a point of collapse through economic and political systems based on endless exploitation, greed and growth and then desperately searches for ways to solve the problem using the same system?

According to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predictions we are currently on track for 4°C warming by the end of the century.¹ As Professor Schellnhuber, from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research (PIK) said, “the difference between two and four degrees is human civilisation.”²

It is now beyond obvious that, as Naomi Klein says, there are no non-radical solutions. We cannot ‘solve’ climate change without changing the system that created it.

It is also not surprising that the corporate system, which includes our political ‘leaders’, is determined to continue with business as usual.

Part of this determination can be seen in the strong push to embrace technological solutions to climate change and the extent to which these ‘fixes’ are now being normalised, particularly through the elite scientific community. Late last year the IPCC gave tacit endorsement to speculative, immature and costly technologies, in some ways accepting that we will not see sufficient mitigation from big business or their political allies.³ We are seeing the scientific community express profound distrust of a failing system and then expect the same system to research and implement risky technologies in equitable, safe and consensual ways.

The recent reports from the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) into geoengineering options⁴ unfortunately continue this trend. The NAS recognises mitigation is critical and by far the best approach to reducing emissions. It recognises that some of the technological fixes have potentially significant risks; that most are not even close to ready for deployment at the scale needed and may never be. It also acknowledges that some of the approaches may actually be costlier than reducing our emissions.

Of four possibly scenarios that the IPCC mapped in its latest report, only one keeps us within the range that climate scientists regard as survivable. This is achieved by removing hundreds of billions of tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere. As geo-engineering researcher Dr Hugh Hunt in the Department of Engineering, at the University of Cambridge, points out: “10 billion tonnes a year of carbon sequestration? We don’t do anything on this planet on that scale. We don’t manufacture food on that scale, we don’t mine iron ore on that scale. We don’t even produce coal, oil or gas on that scale. Iron ore is below a billion tonnes a year! How are we going to create a technology, from scratch, a highly complicated technology, to the tune of 10 billion tonnes a year in the next 10 years?”¹

Others outside the scientific community point out that some of the proposed geoengineering technologies, such as spraying of sulphur aerosols into the atmosphere, cannot be tested at any meaningful scale unless we are prepared to wear the unknown and potentially devastating impacts of uncontrolled ‘experimentation’.⁵ Others note that there are no regulatory or governance structures for any of these technologies that would ensure that the research, experimentation or deployment happens with the consent of the global community.

The suggestion in a recent *Nature* opinion piece⁶ that governance can co-evolve with experimentation is an absurdity – a reckless notion based on the underlying assumption that we will be able to reverse or undo the consequences of acting rashly.

Despite these shortcomings and financial and technical problems, the NAS nonetheless ultimately supports investment, research and experimentation into these technologies.

It’s a dangerous road that we are beginning to travel. The endorsement of investment in research is a get out of jail card for decision makers, who would rather rely on a techno-fix than changes in the system under which they

According to IPCC predictions we are currently on track for 4°C warming by the end of the century



exercise power. It is an incentive not to cut emissions while the hope of a technological bandaid has a pulse. It is an endorsement for technologies that cannot conceivably be used – such as the spraying of sulphur aerosols into the atmosphere. This form of solar radiation management simply masks the effects of rising CO₂ levels and means that the sulphur must be dumped into the atmosphere in perpetuity otherwise we run the risk of massive warming spikes as the ‘mask’ is removed.

Even worse the technological fix is a way of thinking about climate change removed from its causes. This thinking – that the problem is climate change and not corporate capitalism – means that devastation of land, water, species, air, life is ok as long as we ‘solve’ the problem of climate emissions. The IPCC endorsement of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) is a classic example. In order for BECCS to have any hope of addressing CO₂ emissions at necessary scales, vast areas of arable land would be needed to grow the biomass intended for burning and subsequent CO₂ capture. Who would be surprised if that land was taken from countries where land grabbing is already rife? And who would be surprised that these countries tend to be the poorest – and lowest emitting countries?

The problem is much broader than climate. We cannot continue to have a social and economic system predicated on endless growth and exploitation for multiple non-climate reasons. The current rate of extinctions of species with which we share the planet is not a

climate issue, but is a direct result of the same drivers. The deterioration of life support systems – such as soil and water – is not caused by climate change even though climate change will undoubtedly exacerbate these problems.

But these problems, long ignored by the corporate and political class, have been increasingly ignored by the environment movement because it is not campaigning to destroy corporate capitalism but to reduce emissions. Until we shift the debate to causes rather than symptoms, techno-utopianism will continue. When we begin to talk about eliminating the causes of climate change there are no techno fixes or easy solutions.

The influence of the fossil fuel industry on this debate seems obvious. Prevent strong action on climate by any means necessary, including buying resistance; then push on the political class – already convinced that strong action is too damaging or hard or expensive – to invest public money in technologies that will further benefit corporate interests.

As geoengineering or climate intervention strategies gain credibility, the prospects of effective mitigation and removing the causes of climate change both diminish even further.

Unfortunately, it is the tentative support for climate interventions in the NAS reports that will matter most.

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Government's deregulatory extremism puts public at risk

Jeremy Tager

We are surrounded by regulation. Every moment of our waking and sleeping lives is populated with a vast regulatory network. There are thousands of regulations relating to our homes, our clothes, our foods, the way we drive, the places we work, the wages we receive, the super we contribute to, the environment we live in and depend on for life. Many of these regulations have saved lives and protected property and biodiversity.

But regulation in the extreme free market orthodoxy of both the ALP and the Coalition is now by definition bad. Regulations interfere with markets and we shouldn't intervene in markets, even to protect ourselves, because the market through its perfect pricing and behaviour signals will do all of that for us, and more.

Both the ALP and the Coalition are gripped with deregulatory hysteria and it is getting worse.

It is well established, even in mainstream economics, that most industries don't pay the full cost of what they do or produce. These are called externalities and you and I pay for them. In other words we subsidise some of the biggest corporations on the planet every day. When a mine fails to rehabilitate its hole in the ground, it is the public that pays – pays directly for clean up, or indirectly for contaminated water and degraded land that is no longer able to produce food. When companies emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, knowing that this will contribute to climate change, we will pay the costs associated with more extreme weather, rising sea levels, loss of ocean fertility and a host of other impacts that industry quietly passes on to all of us with the complicity of government. Regulation can put those costs back on industry where they belong.

Our leaders however, don't want business to pay for the costs of doing business. The demand to privatise profit and socialise risk is now ubiquitous. Eliminating regulation, including environmental protection and health and safety laws, in this warped system is now seen as increasing efficiency.

This doesn't mean that all regulation is good or that there isn't duplication and stupidity in the regulatory world. Of course there is, but it is important to recognise that the current slashing at regulation is not occurring with any analysis of the purpose or efficacy of the

regulation. For example, the decision to hand federal environmental powers back to the states, which was a 'red tape' reduction measure, was done without any analysis of the effectiveness of current environmental laws and no analysis of the likely effects of this retrograde step on environmental protection. The attack on regulation is not about efficiency but about reducing corporate costs and raising corporate profits at the public expense.

Extraordinarily, the madness of the free market buffoons just went to the next level.

During the October 2014 Estimates hearings in Canberra, it was revealed that the current Government has brought in a new rule that any new regulation that imposes any cost on business must now be 'offset'.¹ That means the equivalent 'burden' of regulation must be reduced somewhere else any time there is a new regulation that imposes costs on industry. If you can't reduce regulatory burden you can't regulate. On the other hand, these titans of illogic conclude that deregulatory measures do not impose any costs.²

What this means is that the costs of doing business – costs that legitimately belong to business – are now to be borne by the taxpayer. We will likely see fewer regulations and existing protections will disappear even further and faster. We will effectively be further subsidising corporate interests because the taxpayer will bear the costs of abandoned regulation or the failure to regulate.

Under these new rules, if a law was passed requiring the labelling of any nanomaterials in consumer products, the cost of that must be offset. That may occur by getting rid of other consumer protection laws. If there are consequences of removing regulation – more public health problems for example, it is the taxpayer that will pay for them, not corporate interests.

If it is found that nanomaterials in food causes harmful health effects (for which there is already some evidence), any regulation costs must still be offset, ensuring that business is not responsible for the impacts of their products. Decisions not to regulate because of these costs will likely increase, meaning that the environmental and health resulting from a failure to regulate will all

When a mine fails to rehabilitate its hole in the ground, it is the public that pays – pays directly for clean up, or indirectly for contaminated water and degraded land that is no longer able to produce food.

be borne by the taxpayer. Obviously, your right to be protected and to make informed choices is not as strong as the right of corporate interests to make even more profit.

And it gets worse. The costs associated with regulation include not only substantial compliance costs but costs of delay associated with, for example, preparing an impact assessment. So, if a new rule is passed that requires industry conduct safety assessments of nanomaterials in food before releasing them onto the commercial market (this has just been proposed in the EU), the costs of compliance, the delays that compliance causes and the administrative requirements of compliance are all part of the costs that must be offset. According to the Government this includes “for instance, the costs of travelling to a particular

location to submit a form or waiting in a queue in order to comply with a requirement”.³

It is possible that one perverse outcome of this perverse rule is that corporations will now seek more regulation as a strategy to get rid of existing regulations they don't like. They benefit far more from new regulations than existing ones, where no offsets are required.

We have reached the point in the breakdown of democratic institutions where the charade of caring for the public interest has disappeared and been replaced by shameless ideologues stuck fast in the service of corporate interests. It is time for them to go.

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Register suggests widespread unregulated use of nanomaterials in agriculture in Australia

Louise Sales

Scientists have argued that plant species exposed to nanomaterials may over time undergo morphological, physiological, genetic, and epigenetic changes that may ultimately affect crop growth, yield, or nutritional status.

The revelation that large quantities of nanomaterials are being used in agricultural chemicals in France has brought into serious question claims made by the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), that nanomaterials are currently not being used in agricultural chemicals in Australia.

France is the first country globally to have adopted a mandatory register of nanomaterial use. Its 2013 statistics¹, released late in 2014, show that nearly 500,000 tonnes of nanomaterials were produced or imported into France in 2013. Over 58 per cent of the notifications made were for nanomaterials used in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

This level of use provides overwhelming evidence that the large chemical companies are now using nanomaterials widely in commercially available agricultural chemicals. The APVMA's claim that there is no evidence of the use of nanomaterials in Australia because no one has applied for regulatory approval is untenable.

The APVMA needs to actively and urgently investigate the extent and nature of nanomaterial use in agricultural chemicals and whether chemical companies have breached regulations in failing to apply for approval of these new forms of chemicals. Parliament needs to investigate the complete failure of the APVMA to cope with this emerging and risky industry.

These nano-chemicals are being used on the food all of us eat and the APVMA cannot possibly know whether these foods are safe for us to eat or farmers to use because the necessary studies have not been done and are not even required by our regulators. A recent review concluded that research into the effects of nanomaterials in agricultural chemicals is so limited that the

“the risk posed to humans consuming these food products is completely unknown.”²

There is, however, significant evidence that nanomaterials can cause harm throughout the food chain. Studies have shown that nanomaterials can potentially harm beneficial soil microorganisms, plants, nematodes and earthworms³ and prevent nitrogen fixation, and that plants can take up nanomaterials⁴ from the soil into their edible tissues and fruits. Scientists have argued that plant species exposed to nanomaterials may over time undergo morphological, physiological, genetic, and epigenetic changes that may ultimately affect crop growth, yield, or nutritional status.⁵

The rapidly expanding use of nanomaterials will invariably lead to their accumulation in soil⁶, water and food.

The risks associated with the use of nanomaterials in agricultural chemicals spring from the same properties that make them appealing to chemical companies – they are much more chemically reactive, often more toxic and more persistent, spread more evenly on plant surfaces and are able to cross biological membranes. Unfortunately, the APVMA has turned a blind eye to these risks and allowed commercialisation to occur with no nano specific regulatory structure in place.

Friends of the Earth Australia is calling for an immediate moratorium on the use of nanomaterials in agricultural chemicals, pending full safety assessments, and the establishment of our own nano-register in order to allow the tracking of these materials through the food chain.

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Tasmanian government axes pesticide monitoring in waterways

Anthony Amis

It was confirmed in October 2014 that the new Hodgman Liberal government in Tasmania had axed the unique decade-long pesticide testing program conducted by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE). This means that there is no routine monitoring of pesticides in waterways except for irregular monitoring by drinking water authorities.

In 2005, the Tasmanian government embarked on an ambitious project to monitor pesticide residues in waterways. The pollution was largely caused by agricultural and forestry practices. Eighty-three sampling sites were used during the nine years that the project was active. This was an important project, as no other state sampled the same number of sites for such a period of time.

Approximately 36 pesticides were (sometimes) tested for, depending on the location of the sampling site. Sites were generally sampled once every two to three months. The most frequently detected pesticide was MCPA (2-methyl-4-chlorophenoxyacetic acid), which was detected 72 times at a number of locations, followed by 2,4-D (35 times), prometryn (25 times), simazine (17), metalaxyl (12), cyanazine (9), metsulfuron methyl (9), triclopyr (9) and a number of others.

MCPA is a selective herbicide used to control broadleaved weeds in cereals, linseeds, pasture and turf. 2,4-D is a herbicide used in Tasmania to control broadleaf weeds in cereals, pastures and non-agricultural areas. Prometryn is a herbicide used in vegetable crops. Simazine is a herbicide used in a variety of guises. Metalaxyl is a fungicide used in vegetable crops. It is clear that the majority of the detections were a result of farming practices.

None of the samples breached Australian Drinking Water Guidelines levels. A detection of the insecticide diazinon at 0.1 micrograms per litre (ug/L) in July 2008 at the Jordan River, Mauriceton, breached Australian ecological guidelines. Several detections of simazine also breached ecological guidelines. There are no ecological guidelines however for MCPA.

Of particular concern were a number of high detections of the herbicides MCPA, 2,4-D and simazine. The highest level recorded for simazine was 2.2 ug/L at the South Esk River at Perth in October 2005. The South Esk River supplies a large portion of the city of Launceston's drinking water. Similarly, a simazine level of 1.27 ug/L was detected in the Macquarie River in July 2007.

Simazine is a triazine herbicide, closely related to atrazine. During the 1990s, Forestry Tasmania placed restrictions on the use of triazines after widespread contamination of waterways, mostly in the northern part of the state. Private forestry owners such as Gunns continued using simazine, as did many farmers.

The highest level of 2,4-D was 11.2 ug/L, recorded at the Clyde River, Bothwell, in July 2014. Levels of 2,4-D above 1 ug/L were recorded at the Rubicon River (July 2008), Tuckers Creek (July 2012), the Duck River (July 2013) and the Welcome River (July 2014).

MCPA was frequently detected in the Duck River near Smithton for nine years, yet the highest amount of MCPA recorded was in the Rubicon River in January 2014. The level detected was 19.1 ug/L, which is probably the highest amount of MCPA recorded in an Australian waterway.

It seems odd timing that the new Tasmanian government decided to stop the pesticide monitoring program during the same year that the highest amounts of 2,4-D and MCPA were recorded by the program. Maybe it isn't so odd when one considers that 63% of all positive detections occurred between 2012–14. Indeed, detections in 2014 had already been on track to be easily the most of any year, with 46 positive detections up to July 2014 – 20% of all detections since 2005!

As the project developed, it appeared to more accurately target catchments where problems were occurring. The most detections of any catchment occurred in the Panatana Rivulet located again near Port Sorell and these 36 detections all occurred after 2011. At the nearby Rubicon River 27 positive detections had been recorded since 2011 – between them almost 28% of all positive samples, all in less than three years. At Tuckers Creek in the state's north east 27 positive samples were recorded since sampling began there in 2011.

It would be interesting to learn what farming bodies lobbied the Hodgman government to axe the program, a decision that is short-sighted and has the interests of agricultural industry at heart. It is also interesting that despite over 200 positive detections over nine years, no prosecutions for water pollution eventuated. It would appear that the old-fashioned attitude of waterways being little more than agricultural drains again holds sway in Tasmania.

Anthony Amis is FoE Australia's spokesperson for pesticides and drinking water.

It would appear that the old-fashioned attitude of waterways being little more than agricultural drains again holds sway in Tasmania.

The Darker Side of Green

Kristen Lyons and Peter Westoby

International science has revealed what many of us felt – 2014 was the hottest year on record. This was not just a blip. NASA also reported that the 10 hottest years have occurred since 1998, pointing to a pattern of sustained global temperature rise.¹ In this climate change world some are pinning hopes on a Richard Branson style 'gaia capitalism', where markets for ecosystem services, combined with a grab bag of techno-fixes (including geo-engineering), will let us trade and tweak our way out of the crisis.²

The global carbon market – including Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) and related projects – are amongst this market hype. In late 2014, Friends of the Earth (FoE) International launched 'The Great REDD Gamble', outlining the social, environmental and economic limits of REDD projects.³ On the basis of their analysis, FoE International joins many other NGOs in taking a 'No Redd' position. Instead, the report outlines support for community forest management, and recognising the value of local ecological knowledge.

Our research, 'The Darker Side of Green', published by the Oakland Institute in November 2014, adds to the research documenting the costs of REDD type projects.⁴ In our analysis of the largest plantation forestry company operating on the African continent, Green Resources, we document what we call the 'carbon violence' on which establishing forestry plantations rely.

In our Ugandan study, we document the extent to which communities have historically relied on land now licensed to the company in Central Forest Reserves for livelihood activities, including grazing animals, cultivating food crops, and accessing sites of cultural significance. They have now been constrained and/or denied access to this land. The outcomes of this are profound, forcing peasant farming families to the margins of existence.

In this context, communities are forced to engage in more marginal livelihood activities: such as moving grazing animals into wetlands,



riparian and other ecologically sensitive zones and moving crop cultivation onto steep and rocky slopes the company doesn't plant trees.

If you are looking to engage further on this issue, check out the website www.carbonviolence.org for some options, but also look out for the work of the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE, www.nape.or.ug). This NGO, a FoE International affiliate group, is beginning to explore the opportunities for extending their community activist education model, known as 'sustainability schools', into villages affected by Green Resources. Sustainability schools are the basis of a broad range of environmental campaigns NAPE is engaged in Uganda, including campaigns related to large scale dams, oil and biofuels.

With on-going collaboration with NAPE, we look forward to sharing more soon about the opportunities and outcomes for sustainability schools related to REDD type projects in Uganda.

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Royal Commission should examine SA's shameful nuclear legacy

Jim Green

In February, the South Australian Labor government initiated a Royal Commission to consider expanding the state's role in the nuclear fuel cycle beyond uranium mining. It seems that the main focus is whether SA could get billions of dollars by establishing an international high-level nuclear waste dump. Uranium enrichment and nuclear power are also on the agenda.

The first test with the Royal Commission comes with SA Premier Jay Weatherill's statement that it will be carried out by independent experts. Is that what he really intends?

The early signs are not good. Former SA Governor Kevin Scarce has been appointed to head the Royal Commission. Scarce put his views on the public record last November. His only specific comments about nuclear power were to promote discredited claims made by Lockheed Martin last year about its proposed 'compact fusion reactor'.

A quick web-search would have set Scarce straight. Lockheed Martin's claims were greeted with the same scepticism and derision that we now associate with the 1989 'discovery' of cold fusion. Daniel Clery, a news editor with *Science* magazine, said: "With no hard information about its performance, fusion researchers are taking Lockheed's claims with a pinch of salt. Many fusion approaches have appeared promising at small scale or in simulation only to become much more complicated once they are scaled up."

Likewise, Matthew Hole, Australia's representative on the International Fusion Research Council of the International Atomic Energy Agency, noted that physicists "aren't getting their hopes up just yet" and that Lockheed Martin's "lack of willingness to engage with the scientific community suggests that it may be more interested in media attention than scientific development."

Next comes the terms of reference. The Premier wants to avoid scrutiny of the uranium mining industry, saying the Royal Commission "will concentrate on the other elements of the fuel cycle – enriching, power and the storing of nuclear waste".

But the uranium industry needs serious scrutiny. For example, the contentious choice of uranium customer countries needs scrutiny. Australia sells uranium to nuclear weapons states, dictatorships, and countries refusing to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Now the major parties want to sell uranium to India, a country

that is actively expanding its nuclear weapons arsenal and refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

If Premier Weatherill believes he has nothing to hide, he will include uranium mining in the Royal Commission's terms of reference. Yet the only reference to uranium mining in the draft terms of reference is for the Royal Commission to consider "whether there is any potential for the expansion" of the uranium mining industry.

Uranium enrichment is included in the terms of reference. The hope is that the pitiful revenue from uranium exports (0.2 per cent of national export revenue) could be boosted by a value-adding enrichment industry. But the Royal Commission will soon learn that there is surplus enrichment capacity globally and it is a non-starter in Australia.

Nuclear power

For the past 10 years we've been fed endless rhetoric about the global nuclear power renaissance. So how's the nuclear renaissance going? The number of power reactors has actually declined over the past decade, from 443 to 437.

The nuclear renaissance is going backwards – and nuclear lobbyists are starting to grapple with that reality. Steve Kidd, who worked for the World Nuclear Association for 17 years, states that the "picture of the current reactors gradually shutting down with numbers of new reactors failing to replace them has more than an element of truth given the recent trends."

Nuclear power is likely to continue to stagnate in North America – and if there is any movement it will be downwards. *Nuclear Engineering International* recently reported: "The US nuclear power industry geared up a decade ago for a nuclear renaissance that did not happen and is not likely to happen."

A pattern of slow decline in Europe will almost certainly play out. The European Commission forecasts that nuclear capacity in the European Union will decline from 131 gigawatts in 2010 to 97 gigawatts in 2025. Germany's conservative government announced a phase-out of nuclear power in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster, with the last reactor to be shut down in 2022. In France, the lower house of Parliament voted last year to cut nuclear's share of power generation from 75% to 50% by 2025.

Japan's nuclear power industry is in a sad and sorry state in the aftermath of the Fukushima

The European Commission forecasts that nuclear capacity in the European Union will decline from 131 gigawatts in 2010 to 97 gigawatts in 2025

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disaster, with all 48 reactors currently shut down. India's nuclear program is in a "deep freeze" according to a November 2014 article in the *Hindustan Times*. South Korea's nuclear industry is slowly recovering from a safety data falsification scandal that led to 100 arrests.

The most that the nuclear industry (and uranium mining companies) can hope for is that growth in China will offset patterns of stagnation and decline elsewhere.

Nuclear power is the one power source subject to a 'negative learning curve' – it is becoming increasingly expensive over time. The UK illustrates the problem. Capital cost estimates for two planned reactors in the UK range from A\$31.3 billion up to the European Commission's estimate of A\$47.9 billion.

Premier Jay Weatherill doesn't seem much interested in nuclear power, saying on ABC radio: "I think that's the least likely outcome of the royal commission. I think what's most likely is that it will be regarded as not viable for either the state or the nation. There is no doubt that there are some technological changes that are occurring which are bringing small reactors into play ... (but) these are highly speculative matters."

Nuclear waste

Weatherill says that the "storing of nuclear waste" will be on the Royal Commission's agenda. Presumably he means an international high-level nuclear waste dump. The Premier must have a short memory ... or a political death-wish. South Australians fought tooth and nail from 1998–2004 to defeat Canberra's proposal for a national dump for low- to medium-level waste.

An international high-level nuclear waste dump is a political non-starter and the proposal is already generating strong reactions. Yami Lester, who lost his sight when the British tested atomic bombs at Maralinga, told *The Australian*: "A few years ago they cleaned up Maralinga from the waste that was left over from the bomb tests ... and now they're going to put more waste back there? That's not fair because it's Anangu land and they won't be able to use that land. Members from the APY, Maralinga-Tjarutja and Arabunna, Kokatha lands say we don't want nuclear waste on our land."

Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke said Australia could end the disadvantage endured by its Indigenous population by opening up traditional lands as dumping sites for nuclear waste from around the world. This would "finally eliminate these disgraceful gaps in well-being and lifetime opportunities", Hawke said.

But the revenue from accepting nuclear waste wouldn't come close to closing the gap. There are simpler and safer methods to close the gap, if only partially. For starters, the federal government could reverse planned cuts of \$500 million from Indigenous spending over the next five years. Hawke has been silent about those funding cuts. Likewise, Warren Mundine – head

of the federal government's Indigenous Advisory Council and another supporter of dumping nuclear waste on Aboriginal land – has not protested the funding cuts.

SA's shameful nuclear legacy

The Premier says the Royal Commission will not be used to "look backwards at things that have gone wrong." But failing to learn from the mistakes of the past makes it all the more likely that they will be repeated.

There have been four 'clean ups' of the Maralinga nuclear test site. Nuclear engineer and whistleblower Alan Parkinson said of the latest 'clean up': "What was done at Maralinga was a cheap and nasty solution that wouldn't be adopted on white-fellas land." Just 15 years after the latest 'clean up', 19 of the 85 waste burial pits have been subject to erosion or subsidence. The half-life of plutonium-239 is 24,100 years.

At Radium Hill in the far east of the state, maintenance of 400,000 tonnes of radioactive tailings is required due to ongoing erosion. Radium Hill has also been used as a radioactive waste dump even though the SA government itself concedes that "the site is not engineered to a standard consistent with current internationally accepted practice."

The contaminated Port Pirie Uranium Treatment Complex was closed in 1962 and the site still hasn't been cleaned up. Over 50 years later, the SA government is still pondering "the ongoing development of management plans and potential remediation." Due to the lack of fencing, the contaminated Port Pirie site was used as a playground by children for many years. The situation was rectified only after a six-year community campaign which Friends of the Earth was proud to have been part of.

South Australia has a shameful nuclear history and the Royal Commission must be allowed to investigate it. But once again, the early signs are not good – there is no mention of contaminated sites in the draft terms of reference, even though a business group is actively promoting its plan to site a high-level nuclear waste dump at Maralinga.

Jim Green is the national nuclear campaigner with Friends of the Earth, Australia.

Saving the river red gums: An historic conservation victory

Will Mooney

In 2010, an historic campaign that united environmentalists and traditional owners succeeded in securing protection for the largest remaining river red gum forests on the planet. As we approach the five-year anniversary of the declaration of the red gum parks, it is important to reflect on the achievements and the 'unfinished business' of a unique campaign for environmental justice.

The Barmah-Millewa Collective of Friends of the Earth (FoE), which formed in 2000, played a central role in the campaign to end logging and cattle-grazing in a network of iconic red gum forests across the Riverina bioregion of Victoria and New South Wales. The collective initially formed to support the Yorta Yorta people in their struggle to gain land justice and environmental protection for their country, in particular the 70 000 hectare Barmah-Millewa Forest, near Echuca on the Murray River.

Despite the Yorta Yorta's ultimately unsuccessful native title claim, Indigenous and environmental activists were able to build an effective alliance with local community groups, other traditional owners and major environmental NGOs including the Wilderness Society and Australian Conservation Foundation, to mount a coordinated campaign for protection and Indigenous management of red gum forest along the length of the Murray. A decade-long struggle ensued.

Between 2005–09, the Victorian and NSW governments conducted investigations into red gum forest management and the campaign used these opportunities to push for strong recommendations. The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council and NSW Natural Resources Commission supported an end to logging and the creation of new national parks.

The alliance also used research, mass rallies, tree-sits, media stunts, political lobbying and community mobilisation to ensure that these recommendations translated into real outcomes. In December 2008, the Victorian Labor government followed through, announcing 90 000 ha of new red gum reserves. Two years later, NSW came to the party, announcing 107 000 ha of additional reserves north of the River Murray. In total, the campaign had succeeded in

protecting over 200 000 hectares of threatened forest, a huge conservation outcome in a highly modified and vulnerable region.

A victory for social justice

The campaign was also a victory for social justice. For the first time in Victoria, Aboriginal traditional owners attained co-management of new national parks and formal recognition of their ancient and ongoing cultural connection to these protected landscapes. The powerful collaboration between Aboriginal and environmental activists challenged established ideas about nature conservation and forged new partnerships that continue to underpin solidarity work today.

The protected red gum forests play a crucial role in the health of Australia's inland river systems. They act as giant strainers for the Murray River and its tributaries, attracting and filtering water, and shifting and sieving nutrients throughout the floodplain landscape. They provide breeding grounds for native fish, nesting sites for native and migratory birds and refuges for threatened species such as the superb parrot and Murray cod. In return, red gum forests need regular flooding and a natural river cycle to replenish parched soil and thin out new saplings. The vitality of red gum forests is a powerful indicator of the health of our vulnerable inland rivers.

Traditional owners have recognised the significance of these forests for millennia. Red gum forests were a source of shelter, food, transport and spiritual sustenance. The thick bark of red gum trees was used to make canoes and shields. An abundance of food supported dense, permanent populations along rivers that were the lifeblood of country. Thousands of heritage sites are dotted across the red gum estate and growing Aboriginal populations maintain strong, active links to these special places.

Saving the red gum forests has allowed the Yorta Yorta people to reestablish some formal control over the Barmah-Millewa Forest, with a co-management board that has a majority of Yorta Yorta members. Last year, the Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board released its first strategic plan. Progress on other co-management arrangements remains patchy (see below).

The vitality of red gum forests is a powerful indicator of the health of our vulnerable inland rivers.

In ecological terms, the new parks have proved to be invaluable. With the Murray Darling Basin Plan signed into law and growing environmental water holdings, these protected forests are set to lead an ecological revival with the return of rains after the debilitating millennium drought. In the Barmah-Millewa Forest, flooding and environmental flows have already seen native fish return in greater numbers to breed in this diverse, protected habitat.

Unfinished business

Despite the impressive victories of the red gum campaign, threats and challenges persist. These forests continue to endure the combined affects of natural vulnerability, exploitation and negligence. FoE has continued to lead the push for intelligent and effective management and recognition of Aboriginal rights in the new reserves.

An unfortunate legacy of the red gum victory was a recommendation to conduct 'ecological thinning' in the new national parks. At best, ecological thinning can be a sensitive, low impact management response to ecological change in drought-stressed forests. At worst, it can be a cover for large-scale, mechanised logging and timber extraction in what should be a protected landscape. The NSW and Victorian governments took the latter approach and pushed for logging trials that would have seen 400 hectares of the Barmah-Millewa Forest subject to logging with commercial harvesting machinery, firewood removal and new roads.

FoE led a campaign to scrap the 'ecological thinning' trial, with public events, newspaper articles, field trips and a petition to federal environment minister Greg Hunt. In 2014, the Victorian Coalition government announced a surprise policy change and pulled out of the trial. Worryingly, the NSW government is still pushing ahead. But their plans have been repeatedly delayed, with a public environmental report still not submitted to the federal government despite being released for public comment over a year ago. FoE and other NGOs are working to ensure that the NSW government follows Victoria's lead (as they did on the establishment of the parks themselves) and withdraws from this perverse trial.

Even more concerning are the recent calls by local logging interests to throw the NSW red gum parks open for full scale commercial logging. Some of the same companies and individuals who benefited from a \$90 million transition package to move out of logging in the red gum parks think that they should be let back in. So far the NSW government has knocked back their claims, but pressure from a well-organised lobby group is mounting. A recent visit to Deniliquin by Federal Forest Industry Advisory Council



Chair, Rob de Fegely, highlighted how a logging agenda for national parks is being pushed at the highest levels of government.

Shepparton, 2007.

While the Yorta Yorta have been able to establish joint management of the Barmah National Park, further downstream, the Wadi Wadi people have seen a promised joint management arrangement for the Nyah-Vinifera Forest all but abandoned. Complications in a native title negotiation saw the Victorian government dump the joint management discussion. By withdrawing from this process, the previous Victorian Coalition government abandoned a commitment to provide justice and cultural continuity to Wadi Wadi people. FoE continues to work with the Wadi Wadi community to ensure that the new Labor government delivers on the previous Labor government's promises.

Water and weeds

To truly flourish, Australia's red gum national parks need three things: adequate, secure funding for park management, weed control and pest management; and adequate environmental flows with a flooding regime that is as close to natural conditions as possible. Sadly, many parks are receiving none of these. Ongoing challenges to the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan mean that delivery of the promised 3200 gigalitres of environmental water is a long way off. Despite their resilience, lack of water means that red gum forests suffer and, if drought returns, places like Nyah-Vinifera and Barmah-Millewa face further decline.

Lack of funding has also seen values in some parks continue to deteriorate. At Nyah-Vinifera, near Swan Hill, local community groups have reported weed outbreaks and illegal logging. Parks authorities acknowledge that additional funding could address the problem, but state governments have been unwilling to pay. FoE has been engaging with the new Victorian Labor government to highlight the need for funding to secure these important ecological assets.

The river red gum is an Australian icon and these unique forests deserve greater recognition from governments and the general public. The red gum campaign forged new alliances and achieved outstanding social and environmental outcomes, but preserving its legacy entails tenacity and resilience: something we can learn from the mighty red gums themselves.

FoE exposes uranium cartel in 1976

Wieslaw Lichacz

A huge jump in the uranium price occurred in the mid-1970s, thanks to a cartel known as the Uranium Club. The cartel was exposed by Friends of the Earth (FoE). It was disbanded and out of court settlements resulted in some club members paying about \$800 million in penalties.

FoE had grappled with the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry since September 1975 in a David and Goliath battle against highly-paid lawyers, company officials, senior government department representatives and corporate public relations consultants.

At the time, *Chain Reaction* carried generic appeals from FoE's 'Leak Bureau' asking corporate or governmental whistle-blowers to provide information. In the dying days of the Ranger Inquiry we received a phone call from someone who had just flown from Melbourne to Sydney. We were asked to come to a secret location in a terrace house near the Oxford Street Police Station to see some important 'luggage' he had brought from Melbourne. We were told not to tell anyone where we were going.

When we got there, we were confronted with a large box full of original files and documents leaked to FoE from the offices of Mary Kathleen Uranium Mining Pty Ltd.

The leaked company files had evidence of:

- shoddy environmental practices
- close surveillance of environmental organisations
- the close relationship between ACTU president Bob Hawke and the chair of Conzinc Riotinto Australia (CRA), Sir Roderick Carnegie
- the complicity of Australian government officials in providing advice to mining companies on how to avoid important nuclear non-proliferation safeguards treaties to sell uranium to places like Taiwan (which was not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) via "Toll Processing" in the US.

The Uranium Club

The files also revealed a uranium producers' group called the "Uranium Club". It consisted of the key Australian and other non-US uranium producers. The Club appeared to have been established with the primary aim of artificially increasing the price of uranium from about US\$7 per pound to a lofty US\$45–50 per pound from 1972 to 1974 in order to squeeze nuclear power producers and US uranium suppliers.



John Proud of Peko-Wallsend (one of the original joint venturers of the Ranger Uranium Mining Company Pty Ltd with the federal government before the government sold its share) was coordinator of the club at the March 1976 meeting of companies and government bureaucrats. The notes of that meeting finish with the statement: "Mr Proud stressed the need for extreme secrecy".

From Chain Reaction, 1976

FoE planned to simultaneously release these documents around the world. We knew that we would need multiple copies. The NSW Environment Centre in Broadway, Sydney, had three photocopiers and we were going like gangbusters. We burnt out one older copier in a puff of smoke! But we kept going with the remaining machines as the bright orange sunrise burnt through the narrow windows over the top of our lone desk in the far corner of the environment centre.

The original documents now had to be re-stapled back into their original state to submit to the Ranger Inquiry as primary evidence.

The first set of copies, wrapped up in brown paper as personal luggage, were immediately taken to the airport, to be hand-delivered to the Californian Energy Commission in San Francisco. The Commission was primed to pass on the documents to the US Justice Department and the US media.

Back-up copies were placed in a locker at Central Railway Station across the road from the Ranger Inquiry, with the key given to one of our office workers with whistle-blowing instructions if

It is quite likely that the commissioners and their advisers never saw this critical primary evidentiary material.

something went wrong with our plans. The other set was on the back of a pushbike peddled by an intrepid FoE activist, always on the move – a veritable moving target for the authorities!

We took a big box of the original documents to the Ranger Inquiry. But we had to get through the filter of the inquiry counsel assisting, John Cummins QC. During the gruelling two years or so of the Inquiry from September 1975 to 1977, the counsel assisting the inquiry went out of his way to preclude evidence presented by environmentalists as ‘inadmissible’.

We were in the corridor of the Old Gas Light Building waiting for the counsel assisting to consider the documents behind closed doors. The wall clock was stuck on 3:33 for the duration of the inquiry – for a moment time had stopped for us too! Our lawyers became very worried with the time the counsel assisting was taking and we had visions of NSW Special Branch and ASIO officers marching down the corridors with handcuffs jingling and no escape for us. We would be thrown into Katingal maximum security prison, the keys thrown away and we would never see the sun ever again!

I hammered on the counsel assisting’s door, pushing it open with my shoulder to see what he was doing. Inside some of the documents were spread over his desk. He was on the phone and looked very embarrassed and hung up quickly. He told us in no uncertain terms that to admit these documents now would mean re-opening the inquiry for another nine months and recalling witnesses. He would not allow that as the government had given the order for the inquiry to wind up. No more extensions of time, he insisted.

Counsel assisting the inquiry rejected our case to admit the documents as exhibits during the final submission hearings. It is quite likely that the commissioners and their advisers never saw this critical primary evidentiary material.

This is only the beginning of a much bigger story that ran on for many years right into the mid-1980s and beyond. Many of the details are covered in books (listed below) written by former Australian Trade Practices Commissioner George Venturini.

Cartel shut down

The cartel story was published in *The National Times* in its August 16–21 1976 edition, causing serious embarrassment to the government and the uranium cartel members that included RTZ, RioAlgom, CRA, Mary Kathleen Uranium Mining (the only company producing uranium in



Australia at the time), Electrolytic Zinc, Peko-Wallsend, Pancontinental, Noranda Uranium Mining and Queensland Mines.

On August 30, once the Californian Energy Commission released the documents in San Francisco, the story broke internationally, and it was splashed across the front pages of major financial papers and dailies around the world over the next few days.

The scheduled Uranium Club meetings in New York were immediately cancelled. The US Justice Department had issued subpoenas for the company executives who were named in the documents and other members of the cartel to appear before a Grand Jury any time they set foot in US. Future meetings scheduled for Paris were also cancelled and the Uranium Club was disbanded.

A person purporting to represent Westinghouse tried unsuccessfully to bribe FoE to get the documents, stating that “price was no object” and that through Westinghouse’s contacts in the Marcos regime, a Filipino environmentalist on death row would be recommended for a pardon by President Marcos.

Through our carefully laid out plan, many of the documents were ultimately placed on the US Congressional Record for all to see despite the Australian inquiry counsel refusing to admit them.

Litigation by Westinghouse and General Electric against the members of the cartel picked up momentum in the US courts and eventually flowed into Australian courts. The conservative Fraser government passed legislation in November 1976 – the *Foreign Proceedings (Prohibition of Certain Evidence) Act 1976* – to prevent FoE or anyone else from providing any further documentary evidence against the uranium mining companies from Australia. The Act was described in a *Chain Reaction* editorial as “one of the most corrupt pieces of legislation to go on to the Australian statutes”.

Westinghouse finally settled out of court with the uranium cartel participants for damages in excess of US\$800 million to make up for its losses due to the artificially inflated price of uranium supplied over four years and some punitive damages for breaching the US *Sherman Antitrust Act*.



Meanwhile, the Ranger Inquiry concluded that the nuclear power industry was unintentionally leading to an increased risk of nuclear war. The Inquiry recommended caution and consultation, but its findings were misrepresented by the government as a green light for uranium mining. John Howard was promoted to Minister for Special Trade Negotiations and was responsible for using uranium trade as a lever to gain better access to European markets. Then in 1980, Bob Hawke switched from being a pro-uranium trade union leader to a pro-uranium politician. And the rest is history ...

Wieslaw Lichacz was a foundation member of FoE in NSW and continued with activist work that included Ambassador of the Atom Free Embassy for 18 months outside Lucas Heights. He represented FoE at the Ranger Inquiry for two years. He is now working on international climate change issues.

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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 current and future work of Friends of the Earth. It involves a regular monthly donation of a self-nominated amount.

Where will Active Friends donations go?

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

- a moratorium on coal and coal seam gas mining through our 'Gulf Coal' campaign
- renewable energy through our 'yes2renewables' campaign
- our work to safeguard water for the rivers, wetlands and forests of over 14% of Australia's landscapes through the 'ourdamningmurray.org' campaign
- FoE's Anti Nuclear & Clean Energy (ACE) campaign, which continues to highlight the dangers of nuclear power and uranium mining and to promote safe alternatives.

Why is the Active Friends Program vital to FoE?

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

How can you join the Active Friends Program?

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

All Active Friends donations are fully tax deductible.



Opposing uranium mining in Brisbane, 1976–78

Jessica Harrison

The mid-1970s was an inspiring time to be active against nuclear madness. As well as the formation of grassroots organisations calling for a moratorium on uranium mining, there were protests, strikes and direct action by unionists. In 1976 in Townsville, a railway worker was sacked after he refused to couple carriages heading to the Mary Kathleen uranium mine. After walk-offs across northern Queensland, he was reinstated. A 24-hour strike by Melbourne wharfies closed the port after police on horses attacked a protest against a ship carrying uranium exports.

In 1976, Friends of the Earth (FoE) Brisbane moved office to the Learning Exchange in Boundary St, West End. I lived and worked there, so I jumped head first into the anti-uranium campaign. Mary Kathleen uranium mine near Mt Isa had re-opened in 1974, and uranium was transported in shipping containers down the east coast railway line. At the Learning Exchange, we started getting calls from railway workers, warning us that uranium was heading south to the Brisbane wharves. A small radioactive symbol was the only marking on the shipping containers carrying uranium.

Our first rally was on the railway line where we blocked the uranium containers from entering the wharf gate. We were roughly dragged off by the cops and the train went in.

Next time, we needed better tactics to delay the export. Peter T and I rode his motorbike to the outer suburbs of Brisbane and hid beside the railway line. After we spotted the containers coming though, we headed to a shunting yard to find out about container movements. It was 3am when we walked into the canteen – we were welcomed with “you must be from Friends of the Earth!” Then the railway workers told us the most likely timing and route for the containers. Meanwhile, the wharfies let us know that once we were on the wharves, all work would stop for health and safety reasons. But how to get onto the wharves at short notice? I had noticed a stormwater drain near the fence. One night, with a storm brewing, two of us crawled along the drain. It was so narrow that I could only move one knee at a time. As stormwater dribbled

along the bottom of the drain, we hoped it would not suddenly increase due to the storm. Then disappointment – the wharf end of the drain was cemented shut!

Ah well, we had other ideas. We camped along the fence, prepared with padlocks to lock the gates against the cops driving in, while we pre-planned our access – over, under, or through holes in the wharf fence. Some people hid in the wharfies’ toilets. The new plan worked well – plenty of people ran in and hid on the wharves, amongst the containers. I climbed up between two container stacks and spent a boring few hours waiting to be found. Only when I joined another activist for a chat did we both get arrested and shoved into a cop van. We rocked the van enthusiastically until the cops threatened us.

About 12 people were arrested and fined for this action – the cops found an obscure charge for me – “being found unlawfully in an enclosed space”.

The Special Branch cops were so arrogant that they swapped around their court appearances at their whim. Their favourite technique for unnerving us was to greet us by name when we arrived at demos, then follow us home or try to provoke another excuse for arrest. Returning from a postering and graffiti run, we found the cops parked diagonally in the street, checking the front door of the Learning Exchange without getting out of their car. The anti-uranium action at the wharf was later dramatised by the cops – we were said to have swum the river to launch our “assault”!

Bjelke-Peterson and his National Party cronies would not allow any delays of uranium export, so in September 1977 we were told: “don’t bother applying for permits to march – you won’t get them”. The subsequent civil liberties campaign took over our lives and led to many more arrests – more than 1800 during 17 Brisbane marches. On 22 October 1977, I was one of 418 “right-to-march” demonstrators arrested – but that’s another story.

The Ranger uranium mine in the Northern Territory also concerned us, in solidarity with the Aboriginal communities threatened with the mine on their ancestral land. The same year, around Christmas time, we occupied the



Jessica Harrison (left) with Bridget (middle).

Rio Tinto office and presented them with an Australian-shaped 'yellowcake' - the faces of the office workers blanched as we arrived, singing one of our many anti-uranium songs (to the tune of 'Hernando's Hideway')

The people up in Arnhem Land

Are threatened to lose all their land

The miners they are right on hand - be damned, it's not their &^%\$ land - olé*

Dollars, dollars, dollars and cents - we'll sell uranium to France and Uncle Sam

Dollars, dollars, dollars and cents - just one question and the answer isn't clear - how to store the waste for half a million years.

After moving to the UK in the 1980s, Peter and I climbed the 'Old Man of Coniston', a Cumbrian mountain above the Windscale/Sellafield nuclear plant. It was a sobering thought that Australian uranium could be powering this risky nuclear power plant, the scene of many radioactive pollution 'incidents'.

The direct action tactics we used in Brisbane in the 1970s are just as useful today - after all, we all live in Blocadia.

Radioactive Exposure Tour

Friends of the Earth's Radioactive Exposure Tour to NSW and South Australia will depart Melbourne on Saturday 27th June and return on Wednesday 8th July. These tours have exposed thousands of people first-hand to the realities of 'radioactive racism' and to the environmental impacts of the nuclear industry. From blue coast to red desert, The 'radtour' will visit two operating uranium mines, Australia's only reactor at Lucas Heights, the former proposed nuclear power site at Jervis Bay, hotspots of uranium exploration, historical sites of resistance, Lake Eyre, the Mound Springs, the Flinders Ranges and much more!

More information is posted at www.radioactivetour.com

If you're interested in joining in the 2015 Radioactive Exposure Tour, email radexposuretour@gmail.com or phone Hannah 0424 626 774.

FoE Melbourne Food Co-op and Café

Established in 1975, Friends of the Earth Melbourne's Food Co-op and Café addresses sustainability at a fundamental level – fulfilling our basic needs in a way that's healthy, fair and affordable for people and the environment. The Co-op is an ethical trader that provides food, fruit and vegetables, health and eco-cleaning products. The emphasis is on providing natural, organic and biodynamic produce that is grown and prepared as locally as possible – preferably by small companies and producers. It is also a community hub that has been bringing people together to collaborate and campaign on environmental and social justice issues for 40 years.

'Reduce, reuse and recycle' is the foundation of our work. We encourage people to bring their own containers. In this way it is possible for people to stop creating large amounts of daily waste in their homes. The Co-op started the 'Say No to Plastic Bags' campaign in 1989. This is an example of how we have led the way for others to come on board with significant sustainability initiatives.

Our other focus has been on promoting organics and local produce which are now widely recognised as important ways to reduce the use of chemicals, pesticides, fertilisers, fossil fuels, industrial pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions.

More recently, in 2010, we began to transition to a palm oil free zone in response to the large amounts of deforestation and displacement of communities globally caused by palm oil plantations. We were able to work with some of our suppliers – such as Rambilldeene Farm Soaps – to encourage them to go palm oil free. In this way we could continue to stock local product from a small producer and also spread the word about palm oil.

Last year, we were excited to see the work of the Co-op recognised by the City of Yarra when we received their Sustainable Business 2014 award.

Early days

As one of the first food co-operatives in Melbourne, Friends of the Earth has served as a model for others to replicate. Starting out as a 'dry foods' co-op in 1975 in Carlton, it is now one of the largest and longest running co-ops of this type.

The Co-op has changed and evolved a lot from those early days and at one point there were two separate co-ops – one for dry foods and the other for fruit and vegetables, housed in different buildings. This second co-op came out of the Food Justice Centre and aimed not only to provide organic fruit and vegetables at reasonable prices, but to improve the network between growers, distributors and consumers.



The Food Justice Centre began in the early 1980s as a response to the patenting of seeds that began to pose a risk to subsistence farmers globally, the use of harmful chemicals in agriculture, and the corporatisation of food production. They produced materials about the methods of food production and their impact on the environment and health.

Looking back at early *Chain Reaction* articles, it's interesting to see the mix of ideas and issues that are explored. Articles on food often referred to the catchphrase "you are what you eat" and reflected an awareness that was emerging at the time – with people starting to respond to

the industrialisation of food production and 'convenience culture' with a concern for the health, environmental and social impacts of these practices. This went hand in hand with an interest in the organic and biodynamic farms that were starting to emerge. Articles explored ideas around healthy eating and offered critiques of 'convenience foods'; debated the health aspects of margarine versus butter; and featured spreads of vegetarian recipes alongside such titles as 'Food: a vehicle for repression, a rallying point for justice!'

We have raised awareness of Friends of the Earth by catering at festivals and fundraising showcasing our food skills and creativity. These fun events brought our community together to celebrate and build stronger connections. With the regular Perry Street festivals we bring together many local community groups to demonstrate positive alternatives and strengthened the relationship between community groups, local artists, musicians and campaigns.

Café

The FoE Café – co-located with the Co-op at 312 Smith St – started around 15 years ago and has grown from a tiny operation to a busy lunchtime that serves a vegetarian lunch plate every day to between 60–100 people.

Café chef Esala Liyanage first heard about the Co-op when he was involved with student activism in the Tarkine forest in Tasmania and decided to move to Melbourne. He started volunteering in 2005 and cooking in 2007. "I really like food co-ops as a political concept so I got involved with FoE," Esala said. "It's good because it's so inclusive of everyone in the community."

Beth Cameron said: "The Co-op and Café are about running an ethical business with environmental and food issues being the priority. Part of our education is through the volunteer program. We have had thousands of volunteers come through with different skills and identities from all over the world. It is an essential and enriching part of the organisation."

We have partnered with North Yarra Community Health on the Café Meals Program providing a healthy meal daily to disadvantaged folk from the local community. We also work with Fitzroy Primary School, they collect our food waste for compost as part of their kitchen garden program. And over the years run many social programs such as the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre that supports people coming out of jail to re-engage and retrain in preparation to enter the community and workforce. We have aimed to provide a non-



judgemental and supportive space for them to develop new skills and restore self-confidence.

We've worked with NMIT students from non-English speaking backgrounds to build language skills and confidence and we regularly host work experience students from local high schools. In April 2014 we collaborated with local community radio station 3CR for a week-long Sustainable Breakfast radio program. 3CR broadcast live from the Café and we provided free organic meals (you can listen to the series at www.3cr.org.au/sustainablebreakfastseries).

Co-op coordinator Karri Cameron said: "What's good about the Co-op is that it's always stayed contemporary. We've been on Smith St through its transitions and been able to adapt and change but still keep our original values. It's flexible, it changes, but always keeps its underlying values intact and also it's relationship to Friends of the Earth as a whole organisation."

The FoE Food Co-op is seeking to document its history – if you would like to share any reflections of your experiences with us, please email food@foe.org.au



Bike rides against uranium mining

Peter Hayes

From its inception [in the 1970s], Friends of the Earth activists were strongly bicycle-oriented. Most rode bicycles to and from the office, wherever they were living. FoE provided a lot of support for bicycle actions for important initiatives such as Alan Parker's Bicycle Institute of Victoria. This included periodic bicycle demonstrations in the Melbourne CBD. I am not sure how many drivers supported these actions – I am sure a lot were upset to be held up by the bicycle rabble. But we were tired of being killed and maimed on the roads and felt it was time for riders to push back against drivers.

I can't remember who dreamed up the May 1975 bike ride against uranium mining and export. I am pretty sure it was Neil Barrett who came up with the idea. At any rate, it was a perfect concept for FoE. It was staged just after the Radical Ecology Conference held at Melbourne University over the Easter break.

Back at FoE, we had been organizing the first bike ride against uranium mining for many months. Organizing scores of riders was a huge logistical task given that we had almost no administrative infrastructure, but somehow, we managed. I joined the ride as it passed up Royal Parade heading north for the Hume Highway. Although I was fit, I began to really feel the pedals pushing back after about four or five hours. By the end of the second day, I was totally buggered.

But with each day that passed, we got stronger and used to the long riding hours. We'd pull into a small town and arrive at a local hall or church that had been sequestered somehow for the riders to doss down. A truck carried our gear and we'd lay down our sleeping bags, do bike repairs, and after a meal produced somehow by the support team, we'd "retire" to the local pub, then catch some sleep.

The Melbourne riders converged with the Adelaide ride in Yass. The next day was a short ride into Canberra. We struck our tents on the lawn opposite old Parliament House and began to seek meeting with the polities. We also sent small groups of bicycles around Canberra to protest at various sites. I remember a bunch of us crowding into a lift with our bikes at a minerals and energy departmental office and the reaction of the office workers as we zipped around their building. It ranged from perplexed to bemused but not hostile. I am pretty sure we also rode *en masse* around Parliament House seeking to levitate it, but it stayed put.

Inside Parliament House, FoE Canberra activists were already walking the corridors. We spent a lot of time in the office of [environment minister] Moss Cass – I think some of us may have even slept in the outer office. In later years, the security services got wise, but that first year, we were fresh and new, and pretty much had the run of the town.

I don't remember how we all got back to Melbourne with our bikes. The scariest moment on the ride for me was crossing a bridge where the Hume became two lanes only and some red-necks decided to drive their Holden ute at high speed down our side (their wrong side) of the highway forcing people up against the bridge wall. No-one was hurt badly on the ride, although we did have at least one prang when a rider came off and broke his collar bone.

This article is extracted from a history of the early years of FoE Australia:

Peter Hayes, 2015, 'Founding Friends of the Earth Australia: the Early Years', <http://friendsearthaustraliabistory.blogspot.com.au>

Bike ride against uranium, with Old Parliament House in the background.



FRIENDS OF THE EARTH AUSTRALIA: 40 YEARS YOUNG

Last year, the Friends of the Earth (FoE) Australia network celebrated the 40th anniversary of our first national conference. In the following pages we present a brief, potted history of FoE Australia's rich and colourful history, with an emphasis on the early years.

Among other sources, this history draws from two documents which can be found online:

- FoE Australia, '30 Years of Creative Resistance', www.foe.org.au/history
- Peter Hayes, 6 March 2015, 'Founding Friends of the Earth Australia: the Early Years', <http://friendsearthaustrialiahistory.blogspot.com.au>



1972

The first FoE group in Australia forms in 1972 at Adelaide University, campaigning on issues including waste, pollution, Coca Cola and French nuclear tests in the Pacific. Following a high profile campaign against Coca Cola, a PR firm infiltrates FoE Adelaide to encourage the group to stop campaigning against the steel company BHP. BHP gives FoE Adelaide \$3,900 to make a film about recycling, which FoE Adelaide turns into an exposé of the company itself.

FoE's origins contrast to some of the slightly older environmental organisations that FoE activist Neil Barrett describes in 1976 as the "establishment, government-funded group(s) which sprang out of an older style, middle class movement".

1973

Peter Hayes writes: "As soon as I arrived back in Australia in late 1973, I began to organize or rather, activate Friends of the Earth in Australia. A couple of tiny groups had already begun to use the name – one by a high school student in Melbourne somewhere, and one in South Australia. I was inspired by the concept of a loose, networked federation, based on the notion of ecological autogestion, or green self management."

1974

First meeting of FoE Australia, held on French Island in Western Port Bay, Victoria, the proposed site of a nuclear power reactor.

Friends of the Earth

Through the 1970s, FoE campaigns extensively to protect Antarctica. FoE publishes 'Antarctica: World Law and the Last Wilderness', and with other groups forms the Antarctica and Southern Oceans Coalition. The campaign – waged in the public realm in Australia and through international negotiating meetings – succeeds. The Madrid Protocol bans mining in Antarctica for at least 50 years.

FoE releases a video of BHP dumping steel at sea with resulting national media coverage.

Peter Hayes writes: "In early 1974, I went to Tasmania to meet with Leigh Holloway who had established the Tasmanian Environment Centre. ... We had already helped take over the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) in October 1973 at the ACF's annual general meeting in Canberra as payback for a series of catastrophic decisions by the ACF's conservative establishment board to not back environmental causes, including Lake Pedder. ...

"Not unreasonably, while I was in Hobart Leigh asked me why we needed FoE when we had taken over the ACF? I answered that they were

not competitive but complementary; that by its very structure ACF would always be slow and relatively muted by virtue of its relationship with governments. We needed a network that by its very nature could never be stopped by the powers-that-be. ... Leigh agreed; and eventually became one of FoE's most effective organizers, bridging the gap between grass-roots social campaigns and ACF as a councillor (along with FoE's Strider and Frank Muller). ACF was reconstituting itself to respond to Green Bans, land rights, and other structural issues such as energy supply that ACF had previously shunned."

FoE Melbourne has its first victory – saving Baw Baw frogs from a proposed ski run development.

Chain Reaction magazine starts – initially as *Greenpeace Pacific Bulletin*. Peter Hayes writes: "FoE Melbourne's first order of business in 1974 was to organize a "Greenpeace Action" in the form of supporting an Australian vessel to sail to Moruroa in mid-1974. This was before Greenpeace existed as an organized entity in Australia. In 1972, a "Greenpeace" vessel captained by David McTaggart had sailed to Moruroa, and Greenpeace in Canada was just starting to get organized. I did not want a Greenpeace entity, but rather, a Greenpeace action that would embody FoE's mission and exemplify our style. This took the form of Rolf Heimann's Tahiti ketch that left from St. Kilda pier of a speech by Jim Cairns and to the sounds of a jazz band. ... To support Rolf's voyage, we began to publish Greenpeace Pacific Bulletins and raising money. I think there were a couple, likely one at start of 1974, and a second in winter 74. This morphed into the FoE magazine Chain Reaction ..."

In 1974, FoE Adelaide is involved in discussions with the Australia Party and the Plumbers and Gasfitters Union and establishes the Campaign Against Nuclear Energy (CANE), which is formally launched in March 1975.

1975

By 1975 there are FoE groups in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne, the Illawarra, Tasmania, Queensland and WA.

FoE Melbourne's food co-operative is established – and is still going strong 40 years later!

FoE organises a Ride Against Uranium – 250 people ride from Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide to Canberra, where Bill Liechacz from FoE NSW burns the coffin of the "ALP Conscience" with a flame kindled by his solar cooker. In 1976, 400 riders participate. The ride built FoE's profile to such an extent that, in the words of *Chain Reaction* editor Richard Nankin, "we now work in overcrowded offices, with people coming and going at all hours, the phones always ringing madly".

FoE anti-uranium activists track the federal government's Ranger uranium inquiry (a.k.a. Fox inquiry) around the country, by train and hitch-hiking. *The Age* says that it is the 300-page FoE submission that "mostly shaped the major qualms expressed by the Fox report" and that "at the



FoE bike ride against uranium.

moment, FoE could rightly claim to be the most potent environmental group in the country".

FoE Melbourne conducts a much-publicised "lavatory sit-in" at Melbourne Airport to protest against Concorde aircraft, complaining about "super-expenditure for a super-luxury". Peter Hayes writes: "We felt that humor was an important weapon which we tried to weave into many of our protests, and this was one of them." The British Aircraft Corporation maintains a "bemused upper lip". The Australian Transport Minister threatens to sue FoE for \$1 million in relation to the FoE pamphlet, 'British Airways is Taking Australia for a Ride'. An editorial in *The Age* urges FoE to step out of the toilets and to worship at the shrine of technological progress.

FoE campaigns against massive high rise developments in inner Sydney, in support of the famous Green Bans. Robert Tickner is the convenor of FoE's urban campaign and later becomes the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

FoE Melbourne campaigns on the problem of lead in petrol. The oil industry fights back, but with strong community education, this issue is won in the mid-1980s by a campaign for lead-free petrol led again by FoE.

1976

The Age newspaper describes the FoE Melbourne office as a "barely furnished terrace house in Carlton ... there is no obvious indication that FoE lives in at least 16 other countries, is represented on the UN Environment Program, and ... has so far gained support of not just the left wing unions but professional organisations and church groups ... the office workers are fairly young, well educated and poor".

FoE Sydney hosts a speaking tour by Dale Bridenbaugh, an engineer with General Electric in the USA, on GE's nuclear safety problems and in particular problems with the boiling water reactor design. Thirty-five years later, those design flaws are exposed in the Fukushima disaster in Japan.

Early editions of *Chain Reaction* carry generic appeals from FoE's 'Leak Bureau' asking corporate or governmental whistle-blowers to provide information. In 1976, a whistleblower

from Mary Kathleen Uranium Mining leaks documents to FoE revealing the existence of a global uranium cartel, leading to protracted international scandals and fines totalling hundreds of millions of dollars.

FoE sets up the Atom-Free Embassy outside the Australian Atomic Energy Commission (Lucas Heights) in November 1976. A gun-shot is fired over the Embassy one night. A tepee is established at the Embassy to function as the local branch of the FoE Leak Bureau (oddly, information is leaked about secret solar energy research at the Lucas Heights site). Vege and herb gardens are established. Lock-ons and truck blockades.

1977

A “vast influx of active and angry people” to FoE groups.

FoE does extensive work on renewable energy options for Australia.

Ride against uranium: Melbourne to Canberra.

FoE is involved in actions preventing the loading and shipping of uranium from wharfs in Sydney and Melbourne. *Chain Reaction* publishes an apology for its lateness: “Absenteeism reached 100% during the Swanston Dock actions where mounted police led a charge over the top of protesters sitting on a wharf beside a ship loaded with Australian uranium. Commenting on the police’s heavy-handed tactics at the protest, Chief Police Commissioner Miller says: ‘I’d use elephants if I had them.’”

In Port Pirie, 200 kms north of Adelaide, a group of concerned people get together to campaign on the radiation risks from the Port Pirie Uranium Treatment Complex and set up a FoE group. In 1981, exceptionally high tides breach the wall of the tailings dam, and some materials are flushed out to sea. As a result of FoE’s lobbying of the Minister of Mines and Energy, the dams are eventually stabilised in 1982 by being covered with a metre of slag from nearby mines. FoE then turns its attention to lead, as the Port Pirie smelter is too close to the town and poses a considerable health risk.

In 1977 the barricades are thrown up on Alexandra Parade in the inner suburb of Collingwood (Melbourne) to oppose the construction of the F19 (later renamed the Eastern Freeway). With strong community support, this campaign is a key activity for FoE. Dozens of protesters are arrested and several are seriously injured.

Almost all FoE groups are working on nuclear and whaling issues (among others). Peter Hayes writes: “FoE Melbourne also mobilized in 1977 to organize protests around the International Whaling Commission in Canberra in June, in coordination with FoE Canberra and the separate Project Jonah. Barbara Belding who had worked with Project Jonah in California attended for FoE International. She first came to Melbourne and we travelled together to Canberra. ... The meeting was held in a hotel near the lake and close to ANU. ... The event itself was a lot of

fun, with Project Jonah inflating a giant plastic Willie the Whale in the corridor housing Japanese delegates, trapping them in the rooms. The police slashing of Willie generated global publicity for the protest.”

1978

A Women’s Edition of *Chain Reaction* has articles on sexism in the environment movement; women at work; and several articles on feminism, sexism and the nuclear industry. A letter in *Chain Reaction* says FoE Sydney and Melbourne are mostly male but “joyfully non-oppressive”.

FoE leaks draft Bills to amend the Atomic Energy Act. The Act allows up to 20 years prison for releasing ‘restricted information’.

FoE is among the few official parties to the Inquiry into Whales and Whaling in 1978. Following the announcement that the last whaling station at Albany (WA) is going to close down, FoE campaigns for a whale sanctuary in Australian territorial waters, a ban on the import of whale products, and for Australia to take a proactive role in international forums to secure global protection for all species of whale from commercial operations.

Author and cartoonist Rolf Heimann is jailed after protesting the visit to Australia of a nuclear submarine. Several years earlier, Heimann took his yacht to join the flotilla protesting French nuclear tests at Moruroa. His book, ‘Knocking on Heaven’s Door’, is published by FoE and gives an insightful ‘activist travelogue’ of opposition to the testing and deeper issues of cultural and political independence in the Pacific. FoE also publishes a book of cartoons by Heimann with a foreword “by our old friend Spike Milligan”.

1979

Due to intense campaigning by many groups, including FoE, the federal government places a total ban on whaling in Australian waters.

Chain Reaction reports that Joh Bjelke-Peterson supports nuclear power, having previously advocated the use of nuclear weapons (‘peaceful nuclear explosives’) to halt the progress of the Crown of Thorns Starfish on the Great Barrier Reef. “Fortunately, the starfish seemed to have slackened off of their own accord – possibly tipped off by somebody!”

There are 46 FoE groups spread throughout the country.

1980

In the 1980s, there is a shift to more targeted solidarity campaigning with the rise of the Food Justice Centre, the struggle against apartheid, links with liberation struggles in Latin America and elsewhere, and growing campaigning on Australian indigenous issues. With the backdrop of the cold war and nuclear proliferation, peace and disarmament issues receive greatest attention during the later 1980s.

“Absenteeism reached 100% during the Swanston Dock actions where mounted police led a charge over the top of protesters sitting on a wharf beside a ship loaded with Australian uranium. Commenting on the police’s heavy-handed tactics at the protest, Chief Police Commissioner Miller says: ‘I’d use elephants if I had them.’”



International Women's Day march, Melbourne.

FoE Melbourne establishes a Food Justice Centre to work on plant variety rights at a time when patenting of seeds begins to pose a grave threat to subsistence farmers around the world. Other concerns include the use of harmful chemicals in Southern nations and corporate ownership and control of food. FoE hosts the Politics of Food conference in Melbourne.

FoE sponsors a visit to Australia by US consumer advocate Ralph Nader.

A Nuclear Free Embassy is set up in a small park near Lucas Heights, but stays for just one week – a brick is thrown at a tent so the Embassy moves to Glebe Island at the invitation of wharfies.

FoE Melbourne starts Musicians Against Nuclear Energy (MANE) including dozens of musicians and bands such as Redgum, Australian Crawl, The Angels, Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons, Atilla and the Panel Beaters, and the Incredible Shambles Band.

FoE helps fund the 'Dirt Cheap' film exposing the manipulation of Mirarr Traditional Owners by the Fraser federal government and the Northern Land Council.

The ALP government in Victoria signs a joint venture agreement with Alcoa over plans to build an aluminium smelter at Portland. A site is selected adjacent to the town itself. This area is of significance to the local traditional owners, the Gournditch-Jmara people. FoE participates in an occupation of the site from September 1980. Despite a successful High Court challenge, the site is bulldozed. Aboriginal artefacts are destroyed and the smelter is built.

1981

FoE, the Merchant Services Guild and other unions highlight the trial of offshore dumping of waste from paper mills. Offshore dumping is subsequently banned.

In 1981, a faction of the *Chain Reaction* editorial collective moves office in the middle of the night to 'save' the magazine from those they regard as not having the "responsibilities we had to the wider national FoE and environmentalist constituency". This may have been due, at least partly, to the size of the editorial collective – a 1981 edition of the magazine credits 45 people as being involved with editorial decisions. Those credited include people who go on to become Senators, local councillors, authors, an adviser to Paul Keating, and the first energy minister in the Victorian Bracks' Government.

1982

In 1982 there are 20 local groups and FoE Australia adopts a new constitution acknowledging local groups as the focus of operations. This seems to mark a shift in the way FoE operates, away from a focus on national collaboration and towards more locally focused activity and greater strategic engagement with other social movements.

A recycling campaign is established in Melbourne, aiming to introduce national beverage container deposit legislation.

FoE Brisbane is involved in community protests against retrogressive land rights legislation.

Atom Free Embassy established in Canberra.

The world bike-ride for peace, from Canberra to Darwin, highlights Australia's involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle.

Blockades at Honeymoon uranium mine in SA in 1982 and Roxby Downs in 1983 and '84, organised by an umbrella grouping called the Coalition for a Nuclear Free Australia. These actions concentrate on 'hindering and frustrating' work at the mines, in order to delay their completion and to raise community awareness. The *Australian Mining Journal* notes that FoE plays a 'leading role' in these blockades.

In a series of letters and articles in *Chain Reaction*, many women express opinions like that of Margie Kaye, who says “the environment movement over the last 10 years has continually failed to examine sexism within its internal structures”. In 1982, Denise Chevalier writes on behalf of FoE Collingwood: “We, the women at FoE, have fought hard for what we have achieved. We have far more women than men working with us. The women are now at the fore in the decision making in all our campaigns”.

1983

Waste minimisation in general and recycling in particular grow as issues, involving FoE groups in Victoria, SA, NSW and elsewhere. The dominant campaign focuses on demands to legislate for deposits to be paid on drink containers.

FoE campaigns on the die-back of native forests on New England tablelands, NSW.

Fruit and vegie co-op is established in Melbourne as a project of the Food Justice Centre.

In 1983, plans are floated for leach mining of gold in Victoria. FoE Melbourne works with the Aboriginal Mining Information Centre as part of a successful campaign to stop this destructive form of mining.

FoE is involved in the Hazardous Chemicals Collective, which campaigns on issues including the bulk chemical facility located at Coode Island in Melbourne’s inner west and undertakes ground-breaking work on the threats posed by dioxins.

FoE’s strong and growing emphasis on social justice is not appreciated by everyone. “I am dismayed at the shift in Chain Reaction from environmental towards social/political issues such as feminism and homosexuality”, wrote one reader in 1983. However, in general there is a clear sense that social justice issues form a part of the ‘core business’ of what FoE should be doing.

1984

Victory in seed variety rights campaign; the ALP policy stops short of allowing plant patenting for cereals.

FoE campaigns to halt a sewerage outfall into Wimmera River, Victoria.

FoE tours international author Jim Harding (‘Tools for the soft path’) to raise awareness of alternative energy sources.

FoE Willunga is set up in the coastal town south of Adelaide in 1984. It helps ensure protection of the Aldinga Reef (from runoff from adjacent farmland and roads) and Aldinga Scrub, a significant pocket of remnant bush in an area with very limited original vegetation. Through co-ordinated work with the Kaurna people, the local traditional owners, FoE Willunga works to secure protection for sections of the Tjilbruke Dreaming track that are threatened by development and other forms of interference.

1985

FoE Ryde (Sydney) discovers radioactive waste from a CSIRO complex in drains in a recreation park in Sydney.

Campaign against uranium mining in Kakadu.

1986

Campaign against visits by nuclear-powered ships to Victorian ports.

FoE Oakleigh saves a 14 hectare strip of heathland (part of a system that once spread across Melbourne’s sandbelt region) from being turned into a soccer ground.

FoE and the Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM) occupy the Uranium Information Centre in Melbourne.

Peter Milton, Labor MP for the seat of La Trobe and later a long-term FoE member, is one of the MPs who causes an uproar by walking out on Paul Keating’s budget speech when the treasurer announces the government’s decision to resume uranium sales to France.

Campaign against visits by nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed ships.



1987

FoE campaigns for a moratorium on the release of GMOs.

1988

Australian Bicentenary – FoE supports actions against the celebrations, including the 45,000 strong march in Sydney on Invasion Day.

FoE campaigns against food irradiation and organises a national tour by irradiation expert Tony Webb.

FoE produces 'soft energy' booklet on renewable energy.

FoE Collingwood moves to Brunswick St, Fitzroy, where it operates a community arts space for the next five years. This gallery provides an early foothold for Indigenous art from central Australia and the western desert region before it is widely available.

1989

FoE campaigns on the use of dioxins in paper and other consumer products.

Campaign against photo degradable plastics (a short-lived fad).

A victory against mineral sands mining in Victoria.

FoE hosts a series of national waste minimisation conferences during the late 1980s.

A campaign led by FoE leads to the introduction of Australian-made recycled paper.

In the 1980s, FoE Adelaide set up a 'slow food' café in Torrensville. In 1989, the group establishes itself as the Green Party of SA. Subsequently, a new FoE group is established in Adelaide and gets involved in green city activism, including the Green City Program, which focuses on city-wide sustainability issues for Adelaide, and helps initiate the Halifax urban development in inner Adelaide.

1990

Uranium shipments from Roxby Downs blockaded in Adelaide.

First FoE Radioactive Exposure Tour in SA. These continue to this day, educating people about the social and environmental impacts of the nuclear industry.

Alliances with various Indigenous communities campaigning against issues such as sand mining on North Stradbroke Island (Minjeribah) in Queensland, and blockades of logging operations in western Victoria.

FoE Maryborough plays a leading role in the year-long blockade on Fraser island against logging of old growth forests. Rainforest Action Group plays a significant role in ending logging operations on the island.

FoE Melbourne starts to Pay the Rent to Aboriginal traditional owners (as does FoE Australia in 1993).

Soft energy group starts in Melbourne, researching and advocating for renewable energy.

Climate change campaign starts.

FoE launches a proposal for national waste strategy (aiming at a 50% reduction by 2000).

Clare Henderson and Larry O'Loughlan are prominent national advocates of Right To Know (RTK) legislation in the early 1990s. RTK refers to the right of people to access information on the existence, quantities and effects of emissions from industrial activities.

1991

FoE supports a campaign to stop the establishment of a McDonalds restaurant in the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

In November 1991, the Australian International Defence Exhibition (AIDEX) is held in Canberra. This is a trade fair for weapons manufacturers, and several thousand people demonstrate outside the National Exhibition Centre. FoE does much of the organising of events, and people from Melbourne help co-ordinate actions at the blockades and run the camp established for the duration of the exhibition. The following year, FoE works with a range of groups under the umbrella of the Disarm the Skies Campaign Coalition to organise actions outside the Aerospace Expo at Avalon, west of Melbourne ('AIDEX on wings').

FoE is heavily involved in community mobilisations against Australian involvement in the Gulf War (FoE Melbourne building ransacked in a night-time break-in).

In August 1991, the bulk chemical facility at Coode Island in inner western Melbourne suffers a major fire and a toxic cloud descends over much of the city. An inquiry is held into the possible relocation of the facility to Point Lillias, a headland on Port Phillip Bay near Geelong. The situation is complicated by plans to locate a naval arms complex on the same headland: the East Coast Armaments Complex. FoE works





Protest against the Australian International Defence Exhibition (AIDEX), November 1991, Canberra.

with a range of other groups throughout the parallel state and federal inquiries into the relocation of these facilities under the banner of the Combined Environment Groups. In the end, neither facility was moved to Point Lillias.

FoE Maryborough begins on the mid north coast of Queensland and continues to monitor threats to Fraser Island and the broader region. Although a number of green groups have laid claim to 'saving' Fraser Island, the role of FoE Maryborough has not received the recognition it deserves in the successful campaign to end logging. Activists Ross and Karen Daniel and Zephyr L'Green are pivotal in the group that keeps the base camp on the Island running for a whole year of blockading. Without the blockades, there would have been far less pressure on the state and federal governments to end logging on the island.

1992

FoE Sydney report 'Bring Back Returnables' is a significant contribution to the debate on recycling. Water campaign is established at FoE Melbourne. GMO campaign starts in Melbourne.

FoE collaborates with the Arabunna People's Committee in an (unsuccessful) effort to gain World Heritage listing for the Lake Eyre Basin. The SA Liberal government offers to host a national radioactive waste dump in the region if the federal Labor government drops the World Heritage proposal.

The East Gippsland Forest Network (EGFN) merges with FoE Melbourne. The EGFN had itself grown from Melbourne Rainforest Action Group in the late 1980s. The creation of the FoE Melbourne Forest Network and the energy of a new generation of activists results in more than five years of intense campaigning to protect Victoria's forests. Over the summer of 1993-94, FoE Melbourne joins the Wilderness Society and Concerned Residents of East Gippsland to form the East Gippsland Forest Alliance. On-the-ground blockades and campaigning continue and have helped win considerable gains in terms of forest protection.

The years under the Victorian Kennett state government (1992-99) mark a time of significant community politicisation and unprecedented resistance at the grassroots level in Melbourne and across the state. FoE plays a significant role in many struggles, both in terms of physical involvement of staff and members in picket lines and campaigns, and also behind the scenes in the training of non-violent action, police liaison, and other aspects of community organising.

1993

FoE is involved in the national protest action held outside the Nurrungar US base near Woomera in SA. The campaign work involves close cooperation with the Kokatha traditional owners, and increased public debate over the nature of the alliance with the US and the deployment of troops to secure the base. Nurrungar is closed in 1999, with protest actions cited as one reason for the closure.

In 1993, FoE Melbourne begins working with Wadjularbinna, a Gungalidda woman from the Doomadgee community in the Gulf country of north Queensland. Many within the Gungalidda community are opposing plans by CRA to develop the Century Zinc deposit at Lawn Hill, 250 kms north-west of Mt Isa. FoE Melbourne holds actions outside the CRA AGM in Melbourne and raises the issue in the AGM itself as part of a campaign that runs for several years. Largely through the efforts of Lee Tan, these campaign links develop into a broader informal alliance. FoE Melbourne activists subsequently help establish the Bugajinda/Moonlight outstation project which includes the construction of basic facilities that allow members of the Moonlight clan to visit their country on a more regular basis, and form the beginning of an eco and cultural tourism business.

A forest campaign is launched in Victoria; blockades are launched in East Gippsland through an alliance of FoE and other groups. National waste minimisation strategy launched.

FoE Melbourne establishes a Water Collective to work on big-picture infrastructure developments, a Melbourne Water review of its sewerage strategy, and many local issues. The Collective is explicitly bioregional in its approach, concentrating on the catchments of Port Phillip and Western Port Bays. It produces the book 'Not Just Down the Drain', focusing on domestic re-use of grey water.

Protest outside CRA office, against the proposed century zinc mine in Queensland.





Coalition Against Freeway Extensions

1994

FoE Melbourne works with the Kerrup Jmara community to set up a tent embassy in the main street of Portland, to protest endemic racism against the Aboriginal community and specific incidents of discrimination around policing and the provision of health services.

Campaign to stop an oil terminal in Western Port Bay, Vic.

FoE is a pivotal force in the Coalition Against Freeway Extensions (CAFE), Victoria. CAFE activists blockade road building operations on Alexandra Parade for over a month. FoE Melbourne and other activists join in a series of arrestable actions that obstruct road works. Eventually all but one of the arrestees have their charges dropped.

FoE hosts Shripad Dharmadhikary of Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement), as part of the '50 years are enough' campaign, aimed at radical reform of the World Bank.

FoE launches a national wetlands campaign.

FoE Melbourne helps establish the Otway Ranges Environment Network (OREN). In 1996, it achieves the first prosecution for a breach of a logging permit on private land in Victoria. With the support of the Environmental Defenders Office, FoE Melbourne takes a case to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, successfully targeting a timber company with

links to a minister in the Kennett government. This victory highlights the scale of problems from logging on private land across the state. FoE activist Anthony Amis spends much of the rest of the decade working to highlight often disastrous logging regimes on private land. He also relentlessly monitors forestry operations on the estate of the Victorian Plantation Corporation once it was privatised and sold by the Kennett government in 1998 to Hancocks, a US-based insurance company.

1995

Successful campaign against re-siting of the East Coast Armaments Complex.

French nuclear tests in the Pacific – FoE plays a key role in community mobilisations.

FoE blockades a train carrying logs to highlight the ecological and social costs of the woodchip industry.

1996

Following the election of the Howard Coalition government in 1996, FoE campaigns against the privatisation of Telstra and speaks out on the blackmail inherent in linking funding of an essential portfolio (in this instance the environment) with the partial sale of a public asset (Telstra).

Ramsar conference on wetlands held in Brisbane; marks the beginning of a much greater involvement of FoE Australia in the FoE International network.

North East Conservation Alliance launched in Victoria after FoE initiative.

'Streets for People' transport campaign launched. Campaign analysis shows need for more inner city bike paths – when local governments refuse, FoE paints its own, quickly followed by formal recognition.

Paper boycott starts to build pressure for the production of Australian-made 100% recycled paper.

More than 50 direct actions are organised by FoE Melbourne in 1996. One of the more dramatic is a blockade of the 'extinction express' – a train carrying whole logs from Bairnsdale in Gippsland to the Midways woodchip mill near Geelong for export to be used in paper production. FoE Melbourne works with community activists from Geelong and the Otways to occupy the Midways woodchip mill on many occasions. A less successful direct action takes place in 1996 – activists accidentally occupy a rice ship in Geelong harbour after scouts identify it as being a woodchip ship. Oops.

FoE Brisbane re-forms in 1996, after a core group of activists involved in the campaign to stop sandmining on North Stradbroke Island decide they want a long term organisational base for their work. In recent times, FoE Brisbane has campaigned against genetic engineering, food irradiation, on nuclear and indigenous issues, coal and coal transport, CSG, and much more.





Protest at Gippsland forest.

1997

Alliance Against Uranium mining forms in Alice Springs. The Aboriginal-led alliance, now known as the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, is still going strong. FoE serves as the secretariat for the Alliance for many years, and has played a major role in organising many of the Alliance's annual meetings and in other ANFA projects.

FoE and other groups oppose sand mining on Minjeribah / North Stradbroke Island, Queensland. Goolengook forest in East Gippsland becomes the focus of a national campaign.

FoE plays a key role working with the Mirarr people to oppose the proposed Jabiluka uranium mine in Kakadu.

FoE plays a leading role organising the Roxstop festival at the Olympic Dam mine in SA and the township of Roxby Downs, to highlight community opposition to uranium mining.

FoE is involved in the campaign for ozone protection.

FoE hosts a tour by exiled Ogoni person Komene Famaa from Nigeria, highlighting the impact of Shell's oil operations on the Niger delta.

1998

FoE Brisbane initiates Reverse Garbage Queensland Co-op, a cooperative that collects and sells industrial discards that would otherwise go to landfill.

FoE Melbourne hosts the Indigenous Solidarity Conference, a ground-breaking gathering of Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists from around Australia.

While FoE Melbourne had enjoyed intermittent contact with the Yorta Yorta Nation for many years, from 1997 onwards this connection becomes stronger. After the 1998 Indigenous

Solidarity Conference, many delegates travel to the Barmah forest to an Indigenous-only strategy session hosted by the Yorta Yorta community. FoE participates in a Yorta Yorta occupation of the Dharnya Cultural Centre in Barmah State Park in 1999, and elders request that FoE assists them further in their main objective of regaining management of traditional lands. Thus FoE Melbourne's Barmah-Millewa campaign is born.

FoE begins working with the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, senior Aboriginal women fighting the federal government's plan to build a national radioactive waste dump in SA. In 2003, FoE successfully nominates the Kungkas for the prestigious Goldman Environmental Award, commonly referred to as the 'green Nobel prize'. FoE launches the Nuclear Freeways Project to generate awareness of proposed radioactive waste transport through NSW and SA. In addition to widespread media coverage and community support, 16 of the 18 councils along the transport route oppose the transport of radioactive waste through their communities. This work leads to a NSW Parliamentary inquiry which issues a strong report. In July 2004, the Howard government abandoned the SA dump proposal.

Jabiluka uranium campaign – FoE helps build mass protests at Jabiluka and in cities/towns around Australia. FoE activists take on a variety of 'behind the scenes' roles like co-ordinating buses for travel to Kakadu from capital cities, and working in the kitchen at base camp. Another successful campaign – Rio Tinto / ERA later gives up and rehabilitation of the Jabiluka mine site begins in August 2003.

FoE joins with the Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Nursing Federation and others in 1998 to launch the Earthworker alliance – a forum to allow for greater co-operation between green groups and trade unions. Despite building considerable momentum in its first few years, a conflict over forest issues later causes a loss of momentum.

FoE hosts the annual FoE International meeting in Melbourne – more than 40 countries are represented.

1999

Water campaign focuses on logging in Melbourne's domestic drinking water catchments. FoE supports traditional owners in blockading logging operations in the Cobboboonee forests, western Victoria.

Railtrack, the company responsible for railways in England, cancels millions of dollars of contracts for Jarrah timber following a FoE report showing that forestry operations are unsustainable.

FoE initiates work on herbicides and plantation forestry.

Streets for People is established as a new transport campaign at FoE Melbourne, focusing on proactive, positive and creative action. Transport issues are also prominent in the work of FoE Sydney. In 2000, FoE Sydney works with other groups to successfully advocate for the \$1.4 billion publicly-funded Parramatta to Chatswood rail link.

Protest against BHP's Ok Tedi copper/gold mine in PNG, Melbourne, c1999.





World Economic Forum 'S11' protest, Melbourne, 2000.

2000

Wildspaces film festival becomes a FoE event.

FoE's Climate Justice campaign is launched, focusing on the human rights and equity dimensions of global warming. In 2001, FoE hosts an international seminar on the themes of climate justice and globalisation. A series of street events, public meetings and direct actions are held to highlight the human dimensions of climate change. FoE starts combining the concepts of ecological debt into its work and begins advocating for recognition of and support for environmental (climate) refugees.

From 2000 onwards, FoE devotes more attention to the ecological and social impacts of the establishment of plantations, including the use of herbicides, impacts on ground water and other negative elements.

On a global level, as neo-liberalism enters a new phase with a systematic liberalisation of trade regimes, FoE's focus on trade issues grows through the 1990s, reaching a high point with the massive protests against the World Economic Forum meeting held in Melbourne in 2000. FoE Melbourne is active in the successful campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which would have established a set of rules restricting what governments could do to regulate international investment and corporate behaviour.

With the Green Institute and Heinrich-Boll Foundation, FoE organises an international conference in Canberra to assess how far global environmental co-operation has developed since the first 'Earth Summit' was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Delegates represent almost 60 countries.

2001

FoE organises a radiothon and other fundraising for communities impacted by an earthquake in El Salvador.

Whites creek wetlands start to be re-established in inner Sydney after a FoE campaign.

FoE joins with various community alliances to oppose the shameless racism of the federal Coalition government.

FoE's Environment and Population project seeks to broaden the population debate beyond a fixation on numbers of people by offering an internationalist perspective on ecology.

2002

Responding to the threat of a second Gulf War, FoE becomes a founding member of the Victorian Peace Network and is involved in anti-war rallies and organising throughout the subsequent invasion of Iraq.

Pangea leaves Australia after attempting to win support for a high-level nuclear waste dump. The proposal came into the public domain after a promotional video is leaked to FoE in the UK.

The Dharnya Alliance, a collaboration between the Yorta Yorta Nation and green and social justice organisations, is formed. FoE organises the first 'Barmah summit' and acts as secretariat for the Alliance.

2003

FoE joins with traditional owners and others to oppose a large open-cut gold mine in the Lake Cowal region of mid-west NSW.

FoE publishes 'Population, Immigration and Environment', generating considerable feedback, both positive and negative, especially from other green organisations.

2004

FoE organises a climate justice tour, traveling the east coast of Australia to highlight the impacts of global warming on Pacific communities.

FoE's Radioactive Exposure Tour meets up with senior Aboriginal woman from the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta days after the Howard government abandons plans to impose a nuclear waste dump in SA.



2007

100th edition of FoE Australia's magazine, *Chain Reaction*.

Ceduna-based Kokatha-Mula woman Sue Coleman Haseldine from FoE affiliate West Mallee Protection wins the 2007 SA Premier's Award for excellence for indigenous leadership in natural resource management.

FoE's Nuclear Freeways campaign visits Canberra, Sydney, the Blue Mountains and Lithgow.

FoE Adelaide's Clean Futures Collective initiates a volunteer work program with the Adnyamathanha community in Nepabunna, near the Flinders Ranges. Tasks include working in the community's bush tucker garden, saving seed of local species and helping with local eco-tourism ventures.

On World Environment Day, FoE Australia joins with the Rainforest Information Centre, Borneo Orangutan Society, and the Australian Orangutan Project to launch the Palm Oil Action Group, calling on Australian consumers, retailers and manufacturers to play a role in curbing massive deforestation in south-east Asia.

FoE climate campaigners host a speaking tour featuring Ursula Rakova and Bernard Tunim from the Carteret Islands, holding forums in Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne to hear the Carteret story of climate-related dislocation and relocation.

2008

FoE works with the Latin American Solidarity Network and a range of other groups to hold an Indigenous Solidarity Gathering in Melbourne. The focus is on Latin America, Asia and the Pacific. It is well attended with Indigenous representatives from Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), North America, Latin America, Melanesia and the Pacific Islands.

Mukwano Australia joins FoE Australia as an affiliate member. Mukwano works with organic farming communities in Africa to establish health care facilities. A health care centre building is completed in Uganda.

2009

FoE Adelaide, in partnership with the Conservation Council of South Australia and the University of Adelaide, hosts Australia's first conference on Earth Jurisprudence in Adelaide. Earth Jurisprudence (a.k.a. Wild Law) calls for a radical shift to our legal system, from a human-only orientation to an Earth-centred approach.

PNG non-government organisation Tulele Peisa is welcomed as a new FoE affiliate. Tulele Peisa supports climate refugees from the Carteret Islands who are in the process of migrating to Bougainville.

Environment groups applaud the Victorian government's announcement of its plan to create a chain of new River Red Gum National Parks along the Murray, Goulburn and Ovens rivers in northern Victoria. FoE worked for almost 12 years alongside Traditional Owners to help secure this outcome.

Earth Jurisprudence (a.k.a. Wild Law) calls for a radical shift to our legal system, from a human-only orientation to an Earth-centred approach.

2010

The Big Melt tour: FoE organises a national climate change speaking tour featuring people from Nepal.

FoE Adelaide coordinates the South Australian Food Convergence, 'From Plains to Plate: the Future of Food in South Australia', drawing together 750 participants. FoE helps establish the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, a growing national network of small farmers, community, environment and health organisations, social and business enterprises to assert the need for a sustainable food policy for Australia.

A delegation from the global peasant's network La Via Campesina makes an historic visit to Australia. The Adelaide leg of the visit is hosted by FoE Adelaide, with farmers from Korea, Japan, Timor-Leste and Indonesia meeting local farmers and community organisations to strengthen links across the Asia-Pacific region for just and sustainable food systems.

Nuclear Freeways campaigners travel from Sydney and Melbourne through northern Victoria and SA, ending up at the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance meeting in Alice Springs.

2011

FoE Melbourne ramps up its Yes 2 Renewables project – initially a website, 'Y2R' becomes a significant campaign.

'Leave it in the Ground' ride against uranium: FoE Adelaide organises a cycling trip from Port Augusta to the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary. Plans for mining in the Sanctuary are later banned by the state government.

FoE Brisbane activist Derec Davies locks on to a Gladstone port corporation dredge after being ferried in by a Zodiac inflatable speed-boat, unfurling a banner which read "Save the reef, halt dredging".

FoE holds a series of forums in western Victoria (Warrnambool, Colac, Ballarat, and Geelong) to highlight the threat posed by the expansion of coal seam gas, coal, and shale gas in the region.

FoE and the Inland Rivers Network release a report on the environmental water needs of major wetlands, lakes and river reaches in the Murray Darling Basin.

FoE organises an east-coast speaking tour of Indonesian environmental activists, highlighting dodgy carbon 'offset' schemes,

FoE affiliate Mukwano Australia supports the Katuulo Organic Pineapple Cooperative to build, staff and maintain a health care centre in Katuulo, a remote rural community in Uganda.

2012

FoE activist June Norman is joined by a growing number of people during her 29-day walk of almost 500 kms from Kumbarilla to Gladstone in Queensland. The purpose of the walk is to highlight the impacts of the coal seam gas industry and it follows the route of a proposed gas pipeline to the port town of Gladstone. The walkers arrive in Gladstone the same day that UNESCO is meeting to assess the impacts that the coal and gas industries are having on the Great Barrier Reef and the surrounding Marine Park.

Four members of FoE Melbourne's Quit Coal campaign climb onto the roof of Parliament House in Melbourne and unfurl a giant banner about the effects of coal on the climate. Nine others lock onto the pillars at the front of the building. Quit Coal activists are also working with local communities in Bacchus Marsh and Anglesea.

After many years of campaigning by FoE campaigner Anthony Amis, the timber treatment chemical copper chromium arsenic (CCA) is designated as being a restricted chemical by the federal regulator.

The Safe Sunscreen Guide produced by FoE's Nanotechnology Project attracts widespread interest and media coverage. The Australian Education Union passes a resolution to protect school-children from nano-sunscreens and provide copies of the Safe Sunscreen Guide to every state school in Australia.

2013

Chloe Aldenhoven and Dom O'Dwyer, activists from FoE Melbourne's Quit Coal campaign, scale a large cooling tower at the coal-fired Yallourn Power Station in the Latrobe Valley and remain there for 30 hours. It is the longest occupation of a power station in Australia's history.

CounterAct is welcomed as a new affiliate member of FoE, supporting communities to take effective, creative, strategic nonviolent direct action on issues of environmental and social justice.

FoE Brisbane campaigns on the problem of dangerous dust from coal wagons. Coal is transported from Acland in the Darling Downs through Toowoomba and Ipswich, then through 21 residential suburbs of Brisbane, passing within 100 metres of many properties.

Building on successful campaigns to protect River Red Gum forests and secure environmental flows through the Murray Darling Basin Plan, FoE Melbourne's Barmah-Millewa campaign focuses on developing an advocacy campaign for Indigenous water rights. Two 'Cultural Flows' films are completed with Traditional Owners along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, highlighting Indigenous people's deep connections to the rivers and waterways in their country.

FoE's 'Nature: Not Negotiable' project campaigns to stop the Commonwealth handing over environmental powers to state governments.





FoE's Nanotechnology Project reveals that two Australian sunscreen ingredient manufacturers have been marketing nano sunscreen ingredients as non-nano. The scandal generates extensive media coverage, and creates industry pressure to develop genuinely non-nano products.

FoE hosts two members of FoE Indonesia (WALHI) who travel to Australia to raise awareness about the push to expand export coal mining in Central Kalimantan.

2014

The 2014 Radioactive Exposure Tour is an epic adventure from Melbourne to Muckaty (north of Tennant Creek) in the NT, the site of a proposed national radioactive waste dump. Participants come from Australia, India, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia, England, New Zealand and France.

Soon after, FoE activists celebrate with Muckaty Traditional Owners after the federal government abandons plans to impose a radioactive waste dump in the NT.

FoE's Barmah-Millewa campaign successfully mobilises community pressure to stall damaging 'scientific logging trials' in River Red Gum national parks.

FoE activists hit the road for a seven-day tour of the Galilee Coal Basin in Queensland. Coal companies plan to build nine new mega-mines in the Basin.

Robin Taubenfeld and other FoE Brisbane activists play a leading role in the Brisbane G20 Peoples Convergence.

FoE Melbourne's Yes 2 Renewables campaign launches a fact-finding road trip at the Hepburn Wind farm, the first stop of an 11-week trip to get a real understanding of the impact the Renewable Energy Target has had on communities in south-eastern Australia.

Beth Cameron, co-ordinator of the FoE Melbourne food co-op, and Cam Walker, FoE Melbourne campaigns co-ordinator, celebrate 25 years of working for the organisation. Beth and Cam are acknowledged at the Yarra Sustainability Awards.

FoE publishes a report on the high levels of chlorine disinfection byproducts in water supplied by Westernport Water to Phillip Island and surrounds in southern Victoria.

FoE Melbourne puts the issue of unconventional gas firmly onto the state political agenda, and makes renewable energy a significant issue in the lead up to the state election.

In just its second year, FoE affiliate Market Forces has an impact on the lending policies of large institutions such as the Big 4 Banks.

White Australia's burning issue – what's wrong with Bill Gammage's book

Ben Courtice and Emma Murphy

A popular argument suggests Aboriginal people always burned country so non-Aboriginal Australians should too, albeit for modern purposes, such as fuel reduction burns. Historian Bill Gammage argued this in the popular and influential book *The Biggest Estate on Earth* (2011).

Remarkably, the book has attracted the praise of writers from both the left-wing *Green Left Weekly* and the far-right Institute of Public Affairs (IPA).

Jennifer Marohasy, formerly a researcher for the IPA and director of its spin-off, the Australian Environment Foundation, says Gammage's book "explodes the myth that pre-settlement Australia was an untamed wilderness, revealing the complex, country-wide systems of land management used by Aboriginal people ... This book must challenge the myth of virgin 'remnant' vegetation that currently underpins significant land management legislation in Queensland and NSW."

Green Left Weekly reviewer Coral Wynter says the book shows "no corner was ignored, from deserts and rainforests to rocky outcrops, across the entire continent for at least 60,000 years until British colonisers began to destroy all this work after their arrival in 1788. The huge destruction white colonisers have inflicted on the landscape is unforgivable, but driven by ignorance. Now we have no such excuse."

Gammage himself wrote in *The Conversation*: "Today, amid the wreck of what Aborigines made, there remain relics of their management. They depended not on chance, but on policy. They shaped Australia to ensure continuity, balance, abundance and predictability. All are now in doubt."

But exactly what those relics consist of, and how to protect them (let alone manage everything else) may not be agreed so easily.

Gammage says Indigenous land management formed one coherent "estate", continent-wide (including Tasmania), and that fire was a key tool everywhere, used to create beneficial combinations of vegetation in the landscape. He goes so far as to say at one point that "most of Australia was burnt about every 1-5 years depending on local conditions and purposes, and on most days people probably burnt somewhere."

This bold hypothesis, however, is where his argument falls down.

For context, Gammage attempts a short summary of the entirety of Indigenous societies and spiritualities, with little reference to Indigenous sources themselves.

He notes at the beginning of the book that "very few sources here come directly from Aboriginal people" because he had "neither the time nor the presumption to interrogate people over so great an area and on matters they value so centrally".

Rather than a valid excuse, this reads more like an insult, a slap in the face to the very people who are central to his argument.

A white view of Aboriginal culture

With recent revisionist re-writing of history, a scholarly tribute to Aboriginal people's knowledge and expertise in caring for country would be a welcome contribution. However, it is worrying that Gammage chose not to talk more to the many Aboriginal people who today care for some of the most ecologically significant areas of Australia – as 23% of the continent is under Indigenous management.

His summary of the many and varied social, economic and spiritual systems that existed pre-invasion seems an oversimplification. His reliance on early 20th century anthropologist writings, rather than contemporary Aboriginal thinkers, is cause for alarm and leads to unconvincing statements such as: "All Australia obeyed the Dreaming ... And [this] in itself is cause for thinking Australia a single estate, albeit with many managers."

Gammage's ecological and historical case is no less troubling. It rests on a huge number of quotes from early explorers' accounts, which made note of Indigenous people's use of fire.

Readers and reviewers may be blinded by the sheer volume of these examples and sources. But ecological knowledge is nothing if not specific to location.

Large parts of his text consist of one example after another – from different explorers, in different parts of the continent, different ecosystems, soil types, seasons. Ian Lunt, Associate Professor at Charles Sturt University, in a blog post entitled "Location, Location, Location" notes that: "Locality matters, and ecological observations – historical and current – can't be traded like swap cards across the country side."

Anecdotes without context

A recent study from the University of Queensland used white explorers' accounts of western Queensland, applying modern GPS mapping technology to chart the locations of observations.

"Nearly 4500 observations from fourteen journals spanning twelve expeditions between 1844 and 1919 were geo-referenced," they say. "The sparse observations of fire suggest burning was

infrequent and mostly restricted to creek-lines and higher-rainfall grasslands in the east and north of the study area and spinifex-dominated vegetation.”

In similar country on the other side of the continent, a research project by the Ngadju people of WA's Great Western Woodlands documented their knowledge of fire on their country, and their current aspirations around fire management.

The study found: “Historically, only specific, relatively small parts of Ngadju landscapes were actively burnt, to maintain open hunting grounds and camping areas, encourage green pick, facilitate travel, and protect people, important places and resources from fire.”

Not only were large areas never actively burned by people, but inevitable lightning-lit wildfire in some areas led to people staying away from these areas in summer, in the more fire-resistant (and rarely deliberately burned) woodlands, and safe places like lakesides.

The challenge for the Ngadju Nation, the report suggests, is “to consider which elements of this regime are desirable and achievable in the future”.

Gammage quotes Thomas Mitchell, one of the same explorers referenced in the UQ study: “Fire, grass, kangaroos, and human inhabitants, seem all dependent on each other for existence in Australia; for any one of these being wanting, the others could no longer continue. Fire is necessary to burn the grass, and form those open forests ... But for this simple process, the Australian woods had probably continued as thick a jungle as those of New Zealand or America.”

Dry grassy woodlands, with rainfall less than 500mm a year (and in many areas, half that) are not likely to produce a thick jungle, with or without fire – and mostly without, according to the two studies mentioned. Which calls into question Gammage's reductionist generalisation of Indigenous fire.

What does colonial Australia want with fire

Even if modern Australia wanted to learn and apply Aboriginal fire management practices wholesale, it is dubious whether it could. Indigenous people lived, and in many places still live, on their ancestral country, with thousands of years of collective knowledge and ecological practice.

Indigenous knowledge has been almost completely lost in many regions. Nevertheless, ecological scientists and Indigenous Australians are seeking to maintain, revive and re-learn traditional fire use in areas where it is possible (especially in the Top End and arid Australia).

It isn't a simple undertaking to translate what is done in these regions to elsewhere.

Two centuries of white Australian land management, the blink of an eye in the continent's history, has caused vast damage and change. Reinstating only one element (fire) out of such a complex system can actually do more damage. For example, introducing a modern interpretation of Indigenous fire practices, in an area where Indigenous people do not have land rights, and cannot access the area for hunting or other practices that also affect the ecosystem, goes against the understanding of the complex interconnectedness of ecology – to say nothing of the many animal and plant species no longer common, that were present in 1788.

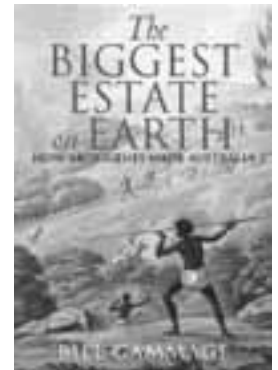
This is not to suggest Indigenous landcare and scientific knowledge should not be incorporated if and where they can be. The authors see a central role for Traditional Owners and traditional knowledge in meeting many environmental challenges. But this must happen in the context of stronger land rights, consultation and involvement of Aboriginal people themselves.

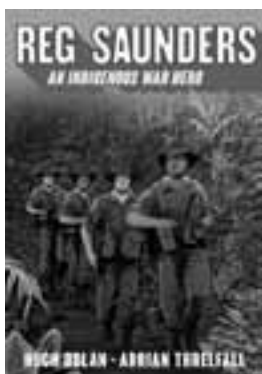
The problem with some of Gammage's argument is that “Indigenous approaches” to fire can be taken out of context, out of the hands of Indigenous people, and used to justify all sorts of ecologically dubious practices.

Gammage supports the alpine grazing lobby, for example, who wish to continue grazing cattle in the Alpine National Park. Despite presenting his case in terms of learning from Indigenous people in Australia, it seems destined to be employed in the service of commercial, colonial land-use interests. Meanwhile, ecologists warn the idea is dangerous, if not disastrous.

European colonists brought with them a cultural imperative to “improve the land”. A white narrative about how Indigenous people managed their relationship with the land can too easily become an unconscious projection of this same cultural belief, conveniently justifying the clearing of remnant vegetation to eke out a few dollars more, or grazing cattle in national parks. Much can be learnt from Indigenous people, but does Gammage's book advance that dialogue, or set it back? We are not confident that it is the former. It would be sad if a genuine desire to learn from Aboriginal knowledge to care for country ended up being manipulated into supporting further destruction.

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www.greenleft.org.au/node/58078*





Reg Saunders: An Indigenous War Hero

Reg Saunders: An Indigenous War Hero

Hugh Dolan and Adrian Threlfall

NewSouth Books

2015

\$19.99

This book tells the little known story of Reg Saunders, the first Indigenous Australian to become an officer in the army. Reg Saunders MBE (1920-90) not only survived the World War II battlefields in the Middle East, North Africa, Greece, Crete and New Guinea, but excelled as a military leader. He was recommended for officer training and, in 1944, returned to New Guinea as a platoon commander - the first Aboriginal Australian to serve as a commissioned officer. What happened during the war to transform a determined young man from country Victoria into a war hero - one who would go on to serve with distinction in the Korean War, and become a pioneering figure for Indigenous rights?



Radical Newcastle

Radical Newcastle

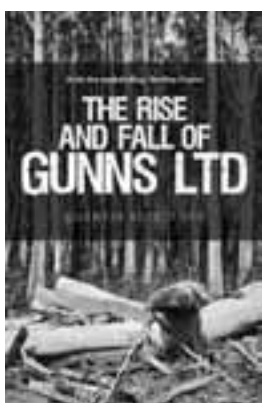
Edited by James Bennett, Nancy Cushing, and Erik Erlund

NewSouth Books

2015

\$39.99

The Star Hotel in Newcastle has become a site of defiance for the marginalised young and dispossessed working class. To understand the whole story of the Star Hotel riot, it should be seen in the context of other moments of resistance such as the 1890 Maritime Strike, Rothbury miners' lockout in 1929 and the recent battle for the Laman Street fig trees. As Australia's first industrial city, Newcastle is also a natural home of radicalism but until now, the stories that reveal its breadth and impact have remained untold. *Radical Newcastle* brings together short illustrated essays from leading scholars, local historians and present day radicals to document both the iconic events of the region's radical past and less well known actions seeking social justice for workers, women, Aboriginal people and the environment.



The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd

The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd

Quentin Beresford

NewSouth Books

2015

\$32.99

Quentin Beresford illuminates for the first time the dark corners of the Gunns empire. He shows it was built on close relationships with state and federal governments, political donations and use of the law to intimidate and silence its critics. Gunns was single-minded in its pursuit of a pulp mill in Tasmania's Tamar Valley. It was also embedded in an anti-democratic and corrupt system of power supported by business, unions and both main political parties. Simmering opposition to Gunns and all it stood for ramped up into an environmental campaign of a scale not seen since the Franklin Dam protests. Fearless and forensic in its analysis, the book shows that Tasmania's decades-long quest to industrialise nature fails every time.

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SIMAZINE

pollution in Melbourne

Simazine is the most commonly detected pesticide in Melbourne waterways and stormwater. It is also known as a "chemical castrator" that impacts on hormone function.

Simazine is a herbicide of the triazine class. It is used to control grasses and broad-leaved weeds. It acts by inhibiting photosynthesis. It is also used as a residual soil sterilant and is very closely related to Atrazine.
atrazinelovers.com

Pesticide Action Network list Simazine as a ground water contaminant, a developmental or reproductive toxin and a suspected endocrine disruptor.
tinyurl.com/simazine

Levels as low as 0.1 parts per billion can damage water-based ecosystems. That's one drop in 5000 barrels of water! Simazine also kills algae, which is the base of the foodchain.

Despite its endocrine impacting properties, Simazine is also registered for use in swimming pools!

Simazine is used for a range of urban uses such as commercial, industrial, rights of way, public utility areas, road shoulders, drains, driveways, railway tracks, revegetation, aerodromes, gutters and footpaths. Application rates for these areas uses can be excessive.
Contact your Council and tell them to stop using Simazine.

Simazine can be sold over the counter from hardware and garden supply stores such as **Bunnings**, **Mitre 10** and **Masters Home Improvement**. It can be used on paths, driveways, tennis courts and other areas. For months after application, Simazine can wash down drains into stormwater, particularly after rain.

Common trade names include:
HORTICO PATH WEEDER | SEARLES PATH WEEDER
YATES ONCE A YEAR PATH WEEDER
GARD & GROW ONCE A YEAR PATH AND PATIO WEEDER
HEININGER BANTOX DF DRIVEWAY AND PATH WEED KILLER
BRUNNINGS READY TO USE PATHWEEDER

Water supply catchment



The multiple detections of Simazine in the Upper Yarra River, are a result of polluted runoff from vineyards, orchards and cropping. Thousands of hectares of intensive agriculture occurs upstream of Sugarloaf Reservoir which supplies drinking water to the northern and western suburbs. (There are over 70 registered Simazine agricultural products).

Recent Simazine detections

BOYCOTT WEED KILLER FORMULATIONS CONTAINING SIMAZINE

endocrinedisruption.org | foe.org.au/pesticides-and-toxic-chemicals

 Friends of the Earth

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