

# chain reaction

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The National Magazine of Friends of the Earth Australia

[www.foe.org.au](http://www.foe.org.au)

## ABBOTT GOVERNMENT ATTACKING THE ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT

#friendoffoe



- Australia needs politically active environmental groups
- The Trans Pacific Partnership
- Australian pesticides map takes shape
- Occupied Palestine: The soldiers in the night
- Semantically engineered crops
- Growing renewable energy in Victoria



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1

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3

## Direct Debit

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(Given name)

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

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

There is a monthly FoE Australia email newsletter – subscribe via the website: [www.foe.org.au](http://www.foe.org.au)

To financially support our work, please visit [foe.org.au/donate](http://foe.org.au/donate)

## Friends of the Earth Online

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### Julie Hyndman

Julie Hyndman was born in Melbourne and lived here almost all of her life. She did not get the opportunity to travel widely but even so, Julie was completely engaged in environmental and social justice issues around the world. In her 20s and 30s Julie gave birth to and raised eight children with the same strong values. In rare quiet moments, Julie would take out her sketchpad and draw beautiful landscapes and delightful lifelike animals.

When all her children had graduated or were in secondary school Julie returned to study, completing a community development course and Arts degree in the 1990's. She keenly followed the developments in East Timor's struggle for independence and became an active member of environmental groups such as WHEN.

Julie was an avid reader of political, economic, philosophical and social justice books, enjoying especially the works of David Suzuki, Peter Singer, Christopher Hitchens and Germaine Greer. Her kitchen was a well-known and lively forum for robust discussions on diverse topics!

Julie loved nature and through her many years of membership of Friends of the Earth followed and supported many campaigns to protect our environment. She spent many happy hours in her garden and nurtured all wildlife and nature. Julie loved to walk among the majestic mountain ash of Victoria's forests. Sadly in 2012 her family lost her to cancer. Her ashes have been scattered at the headwaters of the Yarra river.

Julie left a bequest to Friends of the Earth in her will, to help support all the important work done by this organisation that aligned with her values, to uphold people's rights and to safeguard our environment.

### Indigenous Mapuche people and the First Nations of Australia

The Mapuche-Aboriginal Struggles for Indigenous Land (MASIL) Project is a historic exchange between the Indigenous Mapuche people of Chile/Argentina and the First Nations of this country. The purpose of this project is to facilitate Mapuche and Aboriginal representatives to travel to each others' country and in doing so, build solidarity and links between Indigenous peoples defending their rights and lands.

The project also serves to record the exchange and produce a documentary of approx. 60 minutes duration for international distribution (land polluted by pine and eucalyptus plantations).

The first leg of the MASIL project is planned for October 2016, when Aboriginal representatives will travel to Chile/Argentina to meet with Mapuche Indigenous communities. The MASIL project will be the first exchange of it's kind between Mapuche and Aboriginal peoples.

We need to raise \$60,000 to fund the exchange and documentary. Please donate if you can:

Bank: Bendigo Bank  
Account Name: Mapuche Aboriginal Struggles for Indigenous Land  
BSB: 633-000

Account Number: 153 950 357

Please spread the word around your networks and follow us on [www.facebook.com/MASILproject](http://www.facebook.com/MASILproject)

The Project website is [www.foeausmapuche.wordpress.com](http://www.foeausmapuche.wordpress.com)

To volunteer or support in any other way, or endorse the Project, please contact FoE Melbourne member and MASIL Project Co-ordinator Marisol Salinas, [marisol.salinas@foe.org.au](mailto:marisol.salinas@foe.org.au)



Beth Cameron with Cam Walker

## Beth Cameron – Local Hero

Beth Cameron, co-ordinator of FoE Melbourne's food co-op, won the Local Hero award at the Yarra Sustainability Awards 2015 in June. Big thanks to all the hard work she's been doing over the years and to the City of Yarra for acknowledging her contribution to the community.

The award citation states:

*Beth Cameron has been the coordinator of the Friends of the Earth food cooperative in Smith Street, Collingwood, for 25 years. Running a business for this long is an outstanding effort in its own right, but managing a large, volunteer-run not-for-profit business over this period is an astonishing accomplishment. In addition to being an ethical business that constantly strives to be as sustainable as possible, the co-op has a strong social justice component through providing many hundreds of people a year with experience through the volunteer, Community based order and transitional programs that are run in conjunction with local and state governments.*

[www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/environment/Sustainability-Awards/yarra-sustainability-awards---2015](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/environment/Sustainability-Awards/yarra-sustainability-awards---2015)

## Healthy Futures: New FoE affiliate group

Healthy Futures is a network of health professionals, students and supporters organising to address climate change and related public health challenges. We recognise climate change as the greatest global health threat of our time – but also that the solutions to climate change (e.g. air free from coal pollution, greater active transport) can also bring immediate health benefits. We believe in people power from the bottom up and are keen to hear from anyone interested in working together to help build a healthy global future. To find out more, get involved or drop us a line, head to our website [www.healthyfutures.net.au](http://www.healthyfutures.net.au) or see the inside back cover of Chain Reaction for our contact details.

## Fracking the Planet with the TPP

As Trade Ministers met in Hawaii to continue the secret negotiations of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) in July, FoE Melbourne's Economic Justice Collective released a paper titled 'Fracking the Planet: How the Trans Pacific Partnership will expand fracking in Australia and around the globe'. This paper explains the implications of the Investment State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) Chapter of the TPP (<https://wikileaks.org/tpp-investment>), and explores the ways in which foreign corporations could use this clause to override the Australian law and environmental regulations to continue fracking the planet.

The authors of this paper are concerned that the inclusion of the ISDS clause in the TPP will provide foreign fossil fuel corporations with an avenue by which to sue the Australian government for instituting legislation designed to protect the natural environment, human health and agricultural land. Fracking the Planet paper also explains the basic process of fracking, and presents the current state of play across Australia, the US and Europe, including areas currently engaging in fracking, bans and moratoriums, and areas of community resistance.

*The report, 'Fracking the Planet: How the Trans Pacific Partnership will expand fracking in Australia and around the globe', is posted at: [www.melbourne.foe.org.au/fracking\\_the\\_planet\\_with\\_the\\_tpp](http://www.melbourne.foe.org.au/fracking_the_planet_with_the_tpp)*

*Add your voice to the Economic Justice's joint statement on the TPP already signed by over 60 groups including unions and community organisations: [www.melbourne.foe.org.au/tpp-joint-statement](http://www.melbourne.foe.org.au/tpp-joint-statement)*

### Friends Forever

Leaving a Bequest to Friends of the Earth

If you have the will, we have the way!

Friends of the Earth runs entirely on the generous time and financial contributions of our members, friends and supporters. For some, the affiliation with Friends of the Earth lasts a lifetime – for others even longer.

What better way to honour your connection to Friends of the Earth than to make a bequest in your will? Your contribution will continue to make sure that the grassroots campaigns that you know and love continue their work into the next generation and beyond. Your legacy will be the social and environmental justice that we share as a vision for our planet.

Become a Friend Forever today and find out more at [foe.org.au/bequests](http://foe.org.au/bequests)

## Abbot Point coal port

Two years ago, the prospect of an epic expansion of coal exports in Queensland looked almost unstoppable. With tireless work from a coalition of groups, including Friends of the Earth, coupled with a falling coal price, these projects have been knocked over one-by-one. The proposed expansion of the Abbot Point coal port in northern Queensland has been the most enduring and hard fought battle grounds. The expansion would pave the way for new mega-mines in the Galilee Basin and see the biggest coal port in the Southern Hemisphere tear through the Great Barrier Reef.

Fortunately, a powerful coalition of local indigenous elders, community groups and environmental organisations have come together to oppose the project. On June 19 over 100 people from all over the country came together for the first major convergence of the campaign. The four-day event was a chance to get up to speed with Queensland coal politics, meet the amazing people involved and take action to stop the project.

On the day of action, Birri elder Ken Dodd, whose land would be carved through by coal trains and dammed to supply water to the mines, lead a smoking ceremony at the entrance of the coal port. Each of the 120 people present passed through the smoke and handed a written pledge to Carol Prior, Juru elder and traditional owner of the Abbot Point land. These pledges represented commitments to take action to stop the Abbot Point coal port expansion. The elders then lead a procession onto the coal port property with more than 100 people risking arrest.

Days later, media reports emerged that Adani was stalling work on the project, a strong sign that the pressure is working.

On July 16, Juru and Birri traditional owners travelled to Adani's Brisbane headquarters to deliver pledges from thousands of people, who have committed to take civil disobedience to stop the massive coal expansion.

We're winning, but the fight isn't over!

*Join over 2000 people that have pledged to take action to stop the Abbot Point expansion at <http://reefdefenders.org>*

## New report highlights gulf between renewable and fossil fuel financing

A report released by FoE affiliate Market Forces in June shines a light on Australian banks' financing of the fossil fuel industry and the disparity between lending to 'clean' and 'dirty' energy. Covering over 150 financial institutions, the report - Fueling the Fire - identifies ANZ as the leading lender to fossil fuels, having provided \$12.6 billion to coal, oil and gas in Australia since 2008.

With Commonwealth bank loaning \$9.9 billion, National Australia Bank \$8.3 billion and Westpac \$5.9 billion, Australia's "big four" banks have lent \$36.7 billion to the fossil fuel sector in Australia since 2008. This accounts for over a quarter of the \$135 billion made in loans to the sector since that date.

"This report leaves no doubt that Australia's big banks are the lynchpin of major fossil fuel projects in Australia. With the 'big four' involved in three quarters of the deals to take place in the

sector, it's highly unlikely that any major polluting project could go ahead without their investment", said Market Forces campaigner Julien Vincent.

The report also compares the big four banks' lending to renewable energy against its support for fossil fuels. For every dollar loaned to renewable energy, the "big four" loaned an average of \$6 to fossil fuels. Commonwealth Bank performed the worst of the big four, lending thirteen times as much to fossil fuels between 2008 and 2014 as it did to renewable energy.

*The report is posted at [www.marketforces.org.au/fuelingthefire](http://www.marketforces.org.au/fuelingthefire)*

*An online interactive map is posted at: [www.marketforces.org.au/banks/map](http://www.marketforces.org.au/banks/map)*

*To put your bank on notice about funding fossil fuels, fill out the online form posted at: <http://action.marketforces.org.au/page/s/banks-on-notice>*

**\$456**  
**MILLION**  
**HAS BEEN PUT ON NOTICE**

Tell your bank: if they choose fossil fuels, you'll choose another bank

[MARKETFORCES.ORG.AU/BANKSONNOTICE](http://MARKETFORCES.ORG.AU/BANKSONNOTICE)

**MARKET FORCES**





## Climate Guardian off to the Paris climate talks

A troupe of climate activist women will travel to the Paris UN climate talks in December to express Australians' widespread frustration at our government's inaction on climate change. The Climate Guardians (also known as the Climate Angels) aim to expose Prime Minister Tony Abbott as a climate leaker. They will entreat international leaders in Paris to override the ineffective targets announced by Prime Minister Abbott in August, which ignore key findings released by the Climate Institute showing the vast majority of Australians demand a transition to clean energy away from coal and want deeper cuts in carbon emissions. Climate Guardian co-convenor Dr Liz Conor said: "This woeful commitment to our share of the climate responsibility is an international embarrassment. It smears

all Australians as climate shirkers. It is abjectly derelict in our duty of care to all people and life on earth."

The Climate Guardians are an Australian protest theatre troupe using angel iconography to portend the dangers of government inaction on climate change. In Paris they will be hand-delivering letters written especially by Australian children imploring international climate leaders to secure their future in a safe and just climate.

At the G20 protests in Brisbane last year, the Climate Guardians were awarded the 'Most Aussie Moment' in the Courier Mail after negotiating with police to drop them off at the pub after a hard day's protesting.

*For more information see the ClimActs website: [www.climacts.org.au](http://www.climacts.org.au)*

## Challenging the privatised university

A conference titled 'Challenging the Privatised University' will be held on November 23–24 at the University of Queensland. Co-hosted by the National Tertiary Education Union, Ngara Institute, Friends of the Earth and the National Alliance for Public Universities, the purpose of the conference is to bring together academics, students and civil society organisations to examine the ways in which privatisation, neoliberal ideology, corporate funding and influence have changed the nature of universities from public good to private interest institutions. Can these realities be challenged and changed ... and if so, how?

*More information: [www.privatiseduni.com](http://www.privatiseduni.com)*



## Celebrating the creation of the Nyah-Vinifera Park

On June 28, FoE Melbourne's River Country Campaign and Wadi Wadi community members hosted an event to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the creation of the Nyah-Vinifera Park. We brought together Wadi Wadi people, locals, Friends of Nyah-Vinifera Forest members, past campaigners, Parks Vic representatives and the Mallee CMA. We toured the Park to look at problems in the Park and recent watering, had lunch asked questions and discussed our priorities for the Park going forward.

Nyah-Vinifera Park is just one example of many forests along the Murray River that are still struggling. Our campaign will continue until all River Red Gum forests are protected from logging, hunting and grazing.  
[www.melbourne.foe.org.au/nyah\\_vinifera](http://www.melbourne.foe.org.au/nyah_vinifera)

## Cheaper GreenPower available to FoE members

Friends of the Earth has joined a unique, nationwide, community GreenPower scheme - the Community Climate Chest (C3) - so that we can offer tax-deductible, clean energy to FoE members and supporters. By participating, our members can save up to 50% on standard GreenPower fees, while raising funds for FoE (FoE gets 10% of every donation our members and supporters make to C3).

What is unique about this scheme is that payments for energy certificates can be claimed as tax deductions. C3 is a joint initiative of the Alternative Technology Association, the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group, and GreenPower provider ACXargyle.

While the C3 site offers the option of offsets (for instance to offset the impact of a car), FoE has not traditionally supported simple offsetting as a way of dealing with climate change. However there are options to select a range of offsets on the site if you choose to do so.

*To start saving money and supporting FoE while reducing your carbon footprint, please visit [www.climatechest.org.au/host/foe](http://www.climatechest.org.au/host/foe)*

*See also: [www.melbourne.foe.org.au/support\\_foe\\_and\\_support\\_green\\_energy\\_at\\_the\\_same\\_time](http://www.melbourne.foe.org.au/support_foe_and_support_green_energy_at_the_same_time)*

## ILLUMINO

We are seeking donations across all art forms until November 2nd.

All proceeds to the Anti-nuclear & Clean Energy Campaign to continue working for a future that is Renewable not Radioactive!

## CALL OUT FOR ARTISTS

Friends of the Earth's Art Auction fundraiser is on again!



For more information & to contribute please contact: Michaela at FoE on 03 9419 8700, 0415 656 403 or email [ace@foe.org.au](mailto:ace@foe.org.au).

## Auditor General warns of "damaging legacy" over unconventional gas

Communities across Gippsland and Western Victoria were relieved and heartened that Victorian Auditor General's report on August 19 warned the state government that well recognised risks may make unconventional gas mining unsuitable for Victoria because of its dense population, scarce water resources, and high reliance on agriculture.

The report, called *Unconventional Gas: Managing Risks and Impacts* states that "substantial national and international studies have comprehensively identified the potential and known risks that unconventional gas poses to the environment and the community ... Environmental and social values are integral to this conversation if we are to avoid a damaging legacy in years to come." It points out the gross inadequacy of the current regime for regulating earth resources, stating "the regime has too few environmental controls, and weak consideration of the competing interests for land involved and potential social impacts".

FoE spokesperson Chloe Aldenhoven said: "The auditor general's report confirms what the community has been arguing for years: that the risks are too great, agriculture and existing economies too precious and ultimately, we just don't need the gas."

*The Auditor General's report is posted at: [www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports\\_and\\_publications/latest\\_reports/2015-16/20150819-unconventional-gas.aspx](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports_and_publications/latest_reports/2015-16/20150819-unconventional-gas.aspx)*

## FoE calls for restrictions on pesticides

Many pesticides allowed for use in home gardens have also been detected in waterways, particularly in the Melbourne region. The most commonly detected pesticide in waterways in the Melbourne region is simazine. Simazine and its byproduct Desisopropyl Atrazine, along with the herbicide Atrazine, have been detected in over 40% of pesticides in Melbourne's waterways.

Simazine can be purchased over the counter as a once-a-year driveway herbicide, whereas Atrazine, which is closely related to Simazine, is only allowed to be used by permit holders and can't be used by gardeners, as it is listed as a Schedule 7 Poison. FoE is calling on the Victorian state government to make Simazine a Restricted Use Pesticide, thereby disallowing home gardeners to use the product. A number of other pesticides have also been detected in Melbourne waterways, including MCPA, Triclopyr Dicamba and Imidacloprid. Imidacloprid is a neonicotinoid insecticide also associated with bee deaths. FoE will be contacting gardening radio and television shows about our concerns and is asking FoE supporters to forward this information onto home gardeners in their networks.

*More information is posted at: [www.foe.org.au/sites/default/files/FoEGardenSprays\\_0.pdf](http://www.foe.org.au/sites/default/files/FoEGardenSprays_0.pdf)*

*Contact: Anthony Amis, FoE pesticides campaigner, [ajamis50@gmail.com](mailto:ajamis50@gmail.com)*

# Threats against environment groups, threats against democracy

Ben Courfice

A federal parliamentary inquiry dominated by Coalition MPs is being held into registered environmental organisations. Donations to groups on the Register of Environmental Organisations are tax-deductible under the Income Tax Assessment Act, but the terms of the inquiry and a number of submissions from Coalition MPs and resource industry bodies are calling into question this small measure of public recognition for the work of environmental organisations.

For an organisation to be listed on the register, the main requirements are to keep tax-deductible donations in a separate fund, and to have a primary purpose of protection of the natural environment (including education and research about the natural environment).

While this seems fairly clear and simple, the Inquiry has been set up with terms of reference that have enabled an attack on the rights of registered environment organisations.

The terms of reference include the definition of an environmental organisation and the extent that groups' activities "involve on-ground environmental works". In the course of submissions and the inquiry committee's questioning of witnesses, it has become apparent that many would like to restrict the legitimate activities for environmental groups to "on-ground" activities like tree planting and rubbish removal.

Despite explicit laws and legal precedent for registered charities to engage in advocacy and political comment, arguments heard by the Inquiry from resource industries and federal MPs suggests that it is improper for registered groups to oppose developments (by protest, or legal avenues), to comment on candidates' policies in elections, or to lobby for divestment from particular companies. It is even argued that protests should be off-limits to groups on the register, including both legal protests and civil disobedience.

A number of submissions to the Inquiry have raised allegations of "illegal activities" against a number of environmental groups, in particular Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and Lock the Gate. Many of these submissions have argued that the environment minister should use his executive power to directly and immediately remove these organisations from the register.

This immediate threat seems significant based on the rhetoric used to argue for it. However, on closer examination, it appears more of a scare tactic. The register at present does not prohibit organisations from political comment, protest, advocacy in the courts, or consumer boycotts in any way. Provided it is not the purpose

of an organisation, even participating in (or supporting) protests that break the law are not clearly grounds for removal.

Friends of the Earth is concerned at the threatening rhetoric directed at us and other organisations. Mining and resource companies enjoy unquestioned tax deductions for their membership of lobbying organisations like the Minerals Council, whether or not they are in breach of the law. On the other hand, environmental protests often uphold the law by preventing illegal activities such as logging protected rainforests until government authorities can be prompted to act.

The threat is concerning because it could lead to a reduction in the (small) amount that the public donates to environmental organisations. There are donors such as some philanthropic trusts who require tax-deductibility as a condition of donating, and removing groups from the register would mean that many of their larger donations might go elsewhere. The impact on the finances of environmental organisations could be considerable in some cases. Nevertheless, the Department of the Environment guidelines for removing an organisation are clear and it seems very unlikely that Friends of the Earth or any other organisation is in breach of them.

Perhaps more concerning than the scare tactic (or ambit claim) of immediate deregistration is the longer term aims of the committee. These make reference to overseas systems, and Canada in particular has been cited as an example to follow. In Canada, only 10% of an environmental charity's budget can be allocated to advocacy. This severe restriction is in a country that (like Australia, but more so) has defunded and muzzled government scientists and defunded environmental programmes systematically for years under the conservative Harper government. Australia's neo-conservative government would love to follow suit.

When you consider the battery of undemocratic laws that can be used against protests and activist organisations, such as Tasmania's anti-protest legislation, the parliamentary inquiry is both a worrying new development, and yet also, just another sign of the times. Friends of the Earth will resist what we see as a politically motivated witch-hunt. In the meantime, we ask our supporters to join up and get involved (if you haven't already), and to donate if you can.

*For more information on the Inquiry see: [www.foe.org.au/articles/2015-04-21/another-attack-environment-groups](http://www.foe.org.au/articles/2015-04-21/another-attack-environment-groups)*

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# Australia needs politically active environmental groups

Susan Laurance and Bill Laurance

Should environmental groups that engage in public debate lose their tax-free status? That's the focus of a hotly disputed inquiry currently being considered by the Australian government – specifically, by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment.<sup>1</sup>

Many green groups rely on tax-deductible donations from private citizens and small donors to sustain their work. In Australia, some 600 groups on the environmental register currently qualify.<sup>2</sup> This is comparable to schemes in Europe and the United States, and was initiated to allow citizens and corporations to fund organisations that engage in issues of public interest.<sup>3</sup>

Those who initiated the inquiry, such as the committee's chair, Liberal MP Matthew Hawke, evidently have no problem with groups that do “on-the-ground” activities, such as planting trees and saving baby flying foxes.<sup>4</sup> But they apparently see red when pondering groups such as Greenpeace, The Wilderness Society and Friends of the Earth, who openly decry some government policies.

Particularly rankling for some conservatives have been campaigns to stop coal developments in Australia.<sup>5</sup>

## Bad idea

From our perspective as professional conservation scientists, the government's inquiry is a bad idea wrapped in naïveté.

For starters, almost all environmental decisions made in Australia have been the result of community advocacy. Dating back to the 19th century, community organisations have pushed governments to legislate for the protection of wildlife and natural habitats. For instance, the NSW Bird Protection Act 1881 was passed because of the Zoological Society of NSW. When it comes to environmental protection, governments have rarely acted in the absence of community pressure.

Furthermore, fair and balanced public debates require input from all sides of an issue. Industry has a long history of funding advocacy groups to promote their agendas – often under the aegis of “community organisations” that actually are little more than industry mouthpieces.<sup>6</sup>

Such environmental wolves in sheep's clothing include the Australian Environment Foundation<sup>7</sup> – which is on the register of environmental organisations<sup>8</sup> - but has a distinctly anti-environmental agenda.<sup>9</sup> Major corporations such as Dow Chemical, Chevron, the pre-merger Exxon and Mobil, and Philip Morris Tobacco have contributed to scores of other groups with pro-growth, anti-

environmental agendas as documented by Sharon Beder in her book *Global Spin*.<sup>10</sup>

Legitimate environmental groups, however, often achieve their funding via donations from thousands of individuals and the occasional philanthropic donor, rather than a few wealthy natural resource-exploiting corporations (although some environmental groups do partner with corporations<sup>11</sup> in an effort to effect positive changes in their behaviour). Tax-free status is essential for such green groups.

There is also a clear legal precedent for the status quo. In 2010 the High Court of Australia determined in the *Aid/Watch Case* that advocacy activities aimed at policy or legislative change do not exclude an organisation from being classified as a charity.<sup>12</sup> Such activities were held to contribute positively to public welfare.

Finally, the Australian public is overwhelmingly opposed to the proposal to strip environmental groups of their charitable status. The House Committee solicited public comments to their inquiry, and we assessed every one of them. Of 9,588 submissions, 9,539 (99.5%) were against the proposal, whereas just 28 (0.3%) were in favour (0.2% were neutral or ambiguous). Around 9,000 of the submissions were various types of form letters, although each was submitted by a different individual.

To us, the consensus against the proposal seems obvious. So, why is the government wasting the committee's time on this inquiry when we have far greater environmental concerns that require bipartisan leadership?

## Dangerous trends

In fact, the committee's inquiry is merely one facet of a broader effort by conservative politicians in Australia to hamstring environmental groups.

As well as moves to curtail green groups' political activities, reported previously on *The Conversation* by Peter Burdon<sup>13</sup>, this effort also includes the attempt by Liberal MP Richard Colbeck to ban environmental boycotts<sup>14</sup>, moves to insert gag clauses into the contracts of community legal centres<sup>15</sup>, the defunding of voluntary environmental and heritage organisations<sup>16</sup>, and the drafting of anti-protest laws in states such as Western Australia.<sup>17</sup> Added to this list is the potential prosecution by the Victorian government of a green group that exposed illegal logging practices.<sup>18</sup>

As Burdon emphasises, even if such efforts don't result in legal changes, they force poorly funded green groups to waste precious time and resources defending themselves.

*Should environmental groups that engage in public debate lose their tax-free status?*



Notably, this war of environmental attrition isn't just confined to Australia. There are alarming changes happening all over – most notably in the Asia-Pacific region.

In China, for instance, activists are often hounded while a new law restricting independent organisations is being drafted.<sup>19</sup> Cambodia's rulers are threatening to "handcuff" any group that stirs up political trouble, while lands-rights activists in Lao are similarly harassed.

India is becoming a poster-child for anti-environmental fervour.<sup>20</sup> A new law there is imposing tight restrictions on activist groups. A leaked report by the country's Intelligence Bureau claimed – ridiculously – that public campaigns against coal, nuclear and hydroelectric projects, and genetically modified crops were costing the economy 2-3% points of growth a year.<sup>21</sup> And in January a Greenpeace campaigner was prevented from leaving the country because she planned to testify to the British Parliament about coal mining in India.

## No brainer

In the coming decades, Australia and the world will face true environmental challenges. These include climate change; dwindling water, forests, biodiversity, and natural resources; and an extra 2 billion to 4 billion people to feed and support. We need real leadership and long-term policies to protect the imperilled ecosystems we all rely on.

Australia is certainly part of the global environmental crisis. We are among the world's highest per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases<sup>22</sup> – even without counting all the coal



we export for others to burn. Our parks and protected areas are being seriously diminished.<sup>23</sup> Forest and woodland destruction has recently accelerated.<sup>24</sup> And in northern Australia, many native wildlife species are experiencing dramatic and mysterious population declines.<sup>25</sup>

Criticism can be uncomfortable for policy makers but it has a crucial role in science and democracy. If governments attempt to limit censure of their policies or of industries, then where is our democratic right to freedom of speech? How do we stand morally above corrupt or authoritarian states that cause so much suffering in the world today, if we advance policies that are clearly intended to stifle self-criticism?

Campaign Against  
Freeways Extension

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# Silence on the agenda for enviro-charity inquiry

*It's hard to see the Abbott Government's inquiry into the Deductible Gift Recipient Status of environmental charities as anything except a show trial, writes the Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Andrew Leigh.*

For the past few years, the Australian Marine Conservation Society has been fighting hard to stop millions of tonnes of dredge spoil being dumped onto the natural wonder that is the Great Barrier Reef.

Sometimes their fight has taken them out in the community - collecting signatures on petitions and making phone calls to let Australians know what's happening. Other times it has taken them into courtrooms, where they've stood with other environment groups in seeking injunctions against the harmful dumping.

From time to time, it has also brought the Society into conflict with big resource companies and state and federal Liberal governments via the media and other public forums.

Today in the Federal Parliament, the House of Representatives Environment Committee will meet to hear evidence on whether groups like the Society should continue to have Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status under Australia's tax law. There are almost 600 environmental groups that currently qualify for this status; it allows them to offer tax breaks when accepting donations from the Australian community.

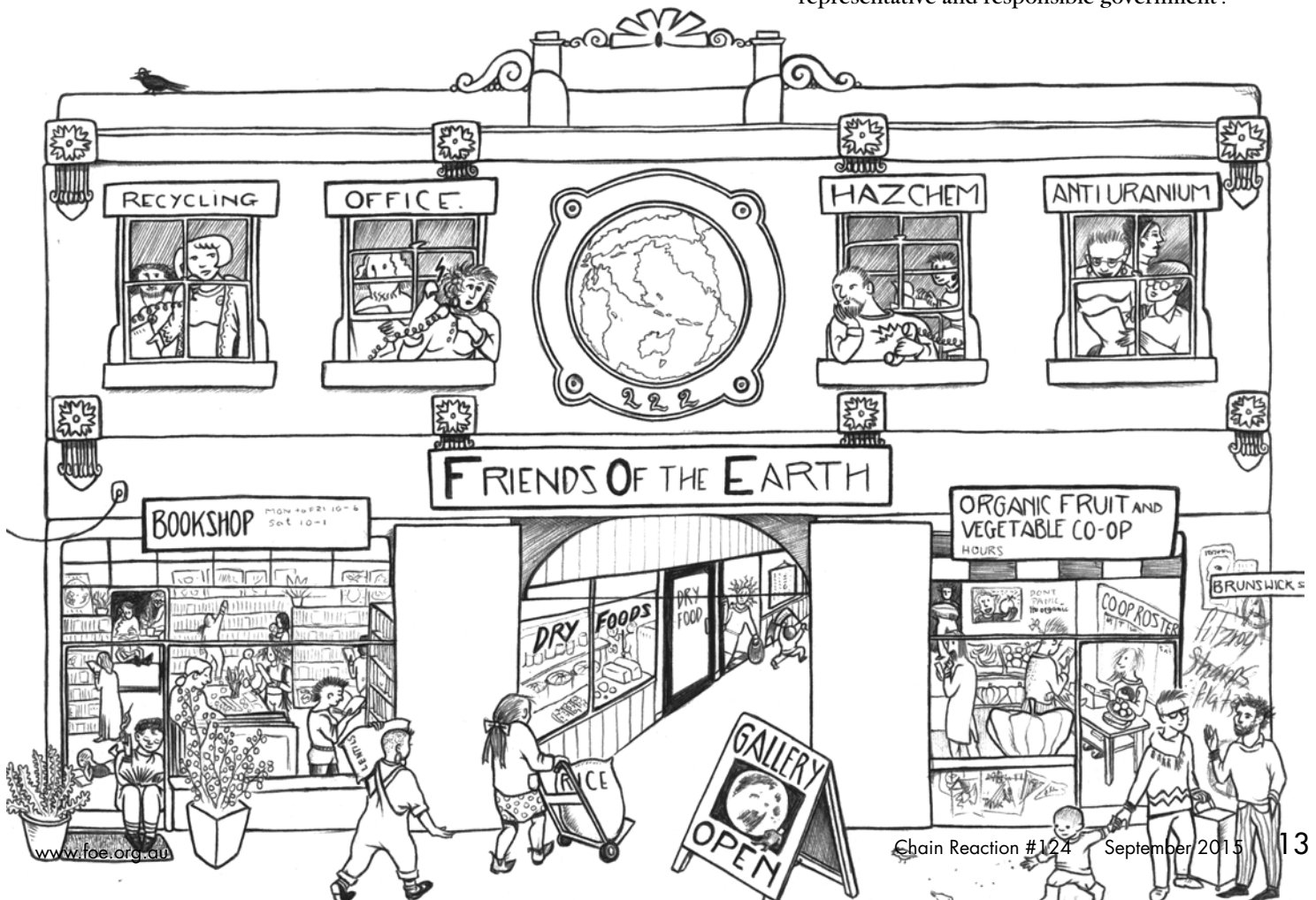
There's a rather cynical axiom in politics that you should never hold an inquiry if you don't

already know what it will find. In my experience, that's actually not true most of the time. In this case however, it's hard to see the Abbott Government's inquiry as anything except a show trial aimed at stripping some environmental Not for Profits of their DGR status.

The Government wants to silence groups who disagree with them on major environmental issues like climate change, fossil fuel reliance and dumping near the Great Barrier Reef. They plan to do it by hacking into their budgets.

Inspired by groups like the right-wing think tank the Institute for Public Affairs, Committee Chair Alex Hawke claims to be concerned about environmental groups getting tax deductions when they're not doing real environmental work. The committee's terms of reference include exploring the extent to which these not-for-profits are carrying out 'on-ground environmental works'.

This suggests that eco-groups are acting improperly if they get involved in political and community advocacy on environmental causes. But the High Court has specifically ruled groups like these have a right to be part of the political conversation. In 2010, the nation's seven most senior judges declared it 'indispensable' for charities to have the right to speak out, to ensure 'representative and responsible government'.





If the Abbott Government has genuine concerns about some environmental groups, the right thing to do would be to refer them to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

The Commission was specifically set up so that it could keep an eye on charities and make sure they're doing the right thing. If there are some environmental groups that genuinely don't deserve their DGR status, the commission will find them out and de-register them.

Charities Commissioner Susan Pascoe has already overseen the removal of over 7,000 Not for Profits from the National Charities Register, which means these groups can no longer qualify for DGR status. Of course, it will be hard for the commission to continue supervising environment groups or any other Not for Profits this way if the Abbott Government goes ahead with its plan to abolish it.

There may well be environment groups out there who are taking advantage of the system and shouldn't be receiving benefits from the tax office. But stripping DGR status from an entire category of n Not for Profits just to catch a few bad eggs would be overkill in the extreme. That's not really what this inquiry is about.

This inquiry is about silencing dissent amongst environmental groups, and sending a message to other Not for Profits at the same time. If the Abbott Government is prepared to take tax

deductibility away from groups like the Australian Marine Conservation Society, what is to stop them from moving on other charities next?

Groups such as the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society have frequently spoken out against Australian Governments (of both stripes) when they've felt that policies would hurt vulnerable Australians. Disability and health advocacy groups regularly criticise state governments in standing up for the people they represent.

It is in everyone's best interests that groups like these continue to feel free to raise their voices. Sometimes their critiques are just as uncomfortable for my party as they are for the current government. But that's how democracy works.

When the committee meets today, its Coalition members will already know exactly what they want to hear from those giving evidence. But that doesn't mean the outcome of the inquiry has to be a foregone conclusion. Let's make sure they know the Not for Profit sector must not be silenced, and that all of us will stand with environmental groups to stop that happening.

*Andrew Leigh is the Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Member for Fraser.*  
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[www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2015/06/silence-agenda-enviro-charity-inquiry](http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2015/06/silence-agenda-enviro-charity-inquiry)

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# Australian pesticides map takes shape

Anthony Amis

Pesticides are a hot issue at the moment. There is a global groundswell of opposition to counter the decimation of bee populations from a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids. At the same time controversy over the world's most 'popular' pesticide, glyphosate, is also escalating, with people concerned about glyphosate residues in food, particularly GE foods, and a range of associated health problems. These concerns were magnified in March 2015 when glyphosate was labelled as a probable carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

Whilst these two issues are rightly gaining support from a wide array of individuals and organisations, a multitude of equally sinister and unresolved pesticide issues remain outside of public scrutiny. For instance organochlorine pesticides are still being detected decades after being used and health problems are still emerging in people years after exposure.

Many ongoing environmental and health problems can be attributed to pesticides, yet how does one properly comprehend the enormity of an industry which has embedded its tentacles into almost every facet of modern life?

Without understanding what has occurred in the past and the tactics that the pesticide industry and their government allies have used, how can campaigners hope to properly understand the present? Are the current controversies about neonicotinoids and glyphosate just history repeating itself?

Communities and individuals fighting pesticides often have a short time reference to work from, limited historical information, limited resources, and perhaps most importantly find it difficult to comprehend that tactics now employed by government and industry often echo similar battles in the past.

In almost every instance of a controversy regarding a particular pesticide, government's have allowed the pesticide to remain in use, sometimes for decades. DDT and 2,4,5-T are good examples of government indifference and the snail's pace at which pesticide reform occurs.

There is no centralised database in Australia that allows one to assess impacts of pesticides across the landscape. Often incidents occur in isolation and are not linked to similar issues which may be occurring elsewhere. Much information concerning pesticides is also hidden by commercial confidentiality and privacy clauses embedded in pesticide legislation, which severely limit what information government departments can release to the public and media. A 'cone of silence' surrounds the entire issue.

Over the past few months individuals linked to Friends of the Earth have begun cataloguing decades of pesticide incidents across Australia in the hope of shedding new light on what has happened and is happening on a national basis. The early phases on this work can be viewed on the Australian Pesticide Map ([www.pesticides.australianmap.net](http://www.pesticides.australianmap.net)) and hopefully it will provide a useful stepping stone in bridging the gulf of understanding that relates to pesticides and provide a useful bridge in better understanding the past and how the past relates to the present.

It is hoped that in time people will be able to send through information so that further case studies can be explored online. The website also provides information regarding pesticide detections in water supplies, which may be of use to people concerned about land-use activities and pollution in their water supplies.

Already, over 1,100 postings have been uploaded to the site from around the country. People can search the website via chemical name, location and era and can also use the zoom function of the site to hone into their local area to determine if pesticide issues have emerged in that community. By then clicking on the icon, further information is revealed.

The project is the result of an anonymous donation sent to Friends of the Earth in late 2014. We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution this donation has made.

*Anthony Amis is a pesticides campaigner with Friends of the Earth, Melbourne.*

*See the Australian Pesticide Map online at: [www.pesticides.australianmap.net](http://www.pesticides.australianmap.net)*

In May 2015, Friends of the Earth pesticides campaigner Anthony Amis was invited to speak in Bright (north east Victoria) by local residents opposing aerial spraying of pine plantations. The plantations, managed by Hancock Victorian Plantations, surround the town and are sprayed with a mixture including glyphosate and metsulfuron methyl.



# Some reflections on Friends of the Earth: 1974–76

Neil Barrett

It was sometime late in 1974.

“God Alan, what happened?” said the young FOE person outside the office in MacArthur Place in Carlton.

A bloody-nosed, somewhat shaken-up Alan: “I was innocently riding down St Kilda Rd and stopped in traffic at the Flinders St intersection. A driver behind started yelling at me to get out of his way. I told him where to get off and before long we had a fair dinkum argument going on. He kicked my wheel, I pulled his windscreen wipers off and got a punch or two in the head for my trouble.”

That was a conversation I overheard on my first day at Friends of the Earth (FoE) in November 1974. I'd only recently left Nimbin where I'd been for almost a year and although violence wasn't unheard of in the land of the hippies, it was quite a shock to see a 50-something cyclist so affected.

Alan was of course Alan Parker, who had started the Bicycle Institute of Victoria in the early 1970s and wrote many letters to *The Age* about how we could virtually eliminate car traffic in Melbourne if everyone rode a bike to the nearest train station. He was a wonderful bike advocate and an inspiration to the younger FoE activists of the day. MacArthur Place was a small single terrace house in Carlton and a very busy place. It was generously loaned rent-free by the next door neighbours, two recently graduated doctors, Brett Forge and Wendy Hayes. Wendy was the sister of Peter Hayes who was the FoE coordinator.

Having shared an old weatherboard house with 50 or so hippies on Nimbin's Tuntable Falls cooperative for 12 months, I was used to rough living. The two bedroom MacArthur Place house was certainly another challenge. Some people worked, ate and slept there, some just worked and had a home to go to. But almost everyone frequently worked into the early hours of the morning. As you might expect, cleaning and tidying weren't high on anyone's agenda.

These were heady days. Environmental activism was in its infancy and the issue of uranium mining had become the issue of the day. Universities had active environment groups and academics, unions and churches were very interested in what we were doing and offering assistance in various ways. Before long the left of the ALP was also convinced that this was an issue worth fighting for.

I'd only been around for a month or two when Peter Hayes announced that he was going to the US and a new coordinator was needed. Whether I put up my hand or was anointed I don't recall, but quite quickly I assumed the leadership mantle.

Peter had been an incredibly hard working and effective leader. He was able to represent the group at all levels of media and politics and would work day and night to write and design publications or organise a demonstration. He famously argued with the Minister for Minerals and Energy Rex Connor when in his Parliament House office and had to be thrown out ... by big Rex himself.

So, a hard act to follow. But, though I didn't have Peter's media savvy or his ability to work day and night, I had more than my share of energy, a passion for the issue and a very strong desire to make sure I made myself useful.

## Bicycle Ride Against Uranium

The first major activity for me was the location search for the inaugural Bicycle Ride Against Uranium to Canberra in May 1975. With another FoE member I drove up the Hume and Newell highways, seeking 10 places for a bunch of long-haired bike riders to hold a meeting for the local citizenry and to stay overnight. So every 50-70 kilometres the 50 people who made the trip had a place to stop over. Most often it was a church hall generously donated to us for the night.

The ride a few weeks later was a great experience. Singer-songwriter Glen Tomasetti rode in a support vehicle and, with her beautiful voice, sang for her supper each night; wherever there was a piano I was called upon to play a bit of stirring ragtime; two Japanese people had



Neil Barrett on a bike ride to Canberra with his notorious beannie.



come from an anti nuclear power group in Japan and, though pretty unfit, managed to ride all the way; and many people came along to hear the speeches and music we were able to turn on.

On day 10, a pretty tired bunch of cyclists reached Canberra. On the way to the lawns we decided to have a sit down with bikes on a Canberra main road. The police reacted with some force and, after a few arrests were made, the road was soon cleared. The event was one of the features of the film *Ride Against Uranium* which made by a film crew from Rusden CAE in Melbourne. Some people have argued that I can clearly be seen darting about helping to orchestrate the sit-down but I reckon it was an activist hippie outsider who just happened to infiltrate our ranks on that day. (Videos of the 1977 'Ride Against Uranium' are posted at [www.australianmap.net/french-island](http://www.australianmap.net/french-island))

These days I ride a sleek carbon fibre road bike. In 1975 I borrowed an old rattler from Brett Forge, did some light training for one or two days and I was off on the 40km to Kilmore for the first stage. Arriving rather late and exhausted at Kilmore I forgot that I had to get out of the stirrups and promptly, and unceremoniously, fell off in front of the welcoming crowd. Not a good start.

When we arrived in Canberra we camped out on the lawns of old parliament House as a delegation went into the House to meet with deputy PM, Dr Jim Cairns. Cairns made his first anti-uranium statement to that group and this was quoted widely in the media.

## Ranger Uranium Inquiry

Soon after our return to Melbourne we were advised that our application for federal funding to prepare a case against uranium mining for the Ranger Uranium Inquiry (often called the Fox Inquiry) had been successful. We received \$30,000 and divided it up between the six or so people who needed it to live on while they worked on different parts of the submission over the next few months.

We did a huge amount of research in that time. One of the most interesting sources of information was the library of Western Mining Corporation, one of the leading companies involved in uranium exploration. I'd somehow got to know one of the staff members and he agreed to let me into the library. There I avidly read *Nucleonics Week* – a very revealing publication which, though it supported the nuclear industry, reported very frankly on its misadventures, failures, accidents and incidents. We helped turn a lot of these events into news items for our many readers of *Uranium Deadline* which started around that time.

Partly because we'd got the funding, FoE Victoria did most of the heavy intellectual lifting at the Inquiry for the FoE Australia network. We presented papers on all important aspects of the industry over a few days.

My contribution was on the Japanese nuclear industry. The supposed need for uranium by the energy-starved Japanese was used by the Liberal government – led by Gorton and then McMahon – as a major reason why we needed to dig up and sell uranium. My work showed that there was growing opposition to the industry in Japan and for good reason: there were too few suitable sites and the country had had quite a problematic history with nuclear matters. Already, by the time the Fox inquiry came around, even the Japanese government had quietly cut back its nuclear target and therefore its need for our uranium. This news had not then reached Australia.

Soon after completing the paper, I nervously went on late night radio 3AR as it was known then. With no help at all from the sleepy guy who showed me into the studio, I attempted to put this point about Japan across to a national audience. In the middle of a sentence my mind went blank, panic took over and my initially strong voice ended in a confused whimper and never recovered. It was a depressing ride home to the Carlton laundry outbuilding I shared with my partner at the time. It took me quite a few days to get over it.





# NO URANIUM NO WEAPONS NO WASTE

It wasn't panic which got me on the first day of the Ranger Inquiry hearings in Melbourne. It was total exhaustion. I rose to speak but found that no sound passed my lips, only a bare whisper. Justice Fox made a flippant remark, I asked one of my colleagues to read my paper, listened to it somewhat painfully and, once finished, immediately decamped for a cycling holiday around the Great Ocean Road. After only two days around the beaches I heard a radio report that the Atomic Energy Commission folk at the Inquiry were arguing that Japan still had a desperate need for our uranium. I immediately got back on the bike and headed back to the FoE office to put out a press release arguing the contrary. Whether that did any good or not I don't recall, but in true Don Quixote style I couldn't let them get away with it, could I?

## Public resistance and direct action

The rest of 1975 was dominated by our effort to help build a strong public resistance to uranium mining. Aware that we represented the activist, alternative section of the movement we supported the establishment of the Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM) which could represent all sections of society and became the umbrella group for the many organisations involved in the issue.

In September FoE (or maybe it was just me!) decided to take on the uranium companies more directly.

The idea was to peacefully break into a meeting of the Uranium Producers Forum which was made up of the companies involved in uranium mining and exploration. As the leading company was EZ Ltd I decided to do a reconnoitre at its head office building in Collins St. Security was non-existent as was very common in those days; one could go almost anywhere in the Melbourne CBD without being challenged by security guards. I looked at the location board on the ground floor and headed towards the meeting room on the fourth floor. Oops. As I walked from the lift I came face to face with a guy I'd been introduced to at a meeting only a few weeks before, a very urbane bloke who just happened to be EZ's director of public relations.

To go back a step. Peter Hayes had been very open in his dealings with opponents and allowed them to come to FoE meetings and to even be members. One of these opponents was Ian Hore-Lacy who was CRA's environment manager. As part of his work, he was a well-known supporter of lead in petrol at a time when virtually all governments here and overseas had recognised it as a health hazard. Hore-Lacy was also believed a member of both FoE and the ACF in those days as he attempted to straddle the whole environment scene. He even occasionally attended our monthly general meetings and had his say on our work. It was he who introduced me to his highly-placed mate from EZ.

This mate was the last person I wanted to see during my reconnoitre. To his credit, he merely said 'Hello Neil, what brings you here?' Feeling like a kid caught with a pocketful of unpaid-for lollies, I think I mumbled something about being interested in modern city buildings and got out of that particular modern building as fast as I could.

## Red Light for Yellowcake

Towards the end of 1975, Jim Falk and I discussed the need for a book on the issue. The result was the cleverly-titled *Red Light for Yellowcake: the Case Against Uranium Mining*, a 95-page publication written by Jim and I and Denis Hayes, an energy expert with the American organisation, The Worldwatch Institute. Over 30,000 copies of Red Light were sold at a dollar each. Low printing and other publication costs meant that it returned a handsome profit to FoE over the next few years.

A few years ago I googled the title. To my amazement Amazon had it for sale as a 'rare book' for around \$20.

This was a time when unions were very supportive with cash donations. Simon Crean of the Storemen and Packers was a good supporter as was John Halfpenny of the AMWU, who paid me a handy sum to write his submission to the Ranger Inquiry. Also helpful were the officers of the Ship Painters and Dockers Union, which was rather famous for murder and mayhem. I was a nodding acquaintance of one of its leaders, Jack 'Putty Nose' Nicholls who'd attended meetings we'd organised with union officials. In 1981, Nicholls was found dead in his car while on his way to give evidence at a Royal Commission on the activities of the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union.

## Concord aircraft

Apart from uranium mining, the issue we worked on intensively for a short period was the arrival of the Concord aircraft in Melbourne. David Hughes was the guy who got us interested and who led the campaign. Somehow David got on Channel Seven's current affairs flagship of the day and was interviewed by Greg Shackleton, later to be one of the journalists killed at Balibo in East Timor. Shackleton gave our inexperienced David quite a grilling and in the end had him on the ropes, struggling for words. Next day I rang Shackleton to complain about what I saw as his aggressive treatment of an innocent protestor. He let me know in no uncertain words that if FoE wanted to be a major player in issues like this we needed to realise that our representatives would not receive kid-glove treatment. Years later that I found myself largely agreeing with Shackleton.

On the day of the Concord's arrival, we'd arranged for a couple of CSIRO audio experts to bring their equipment to a hill under the plane's flight-path so that we could prove that it was so loud that it should be banned. Somehow we'd found out from which direction it would fly in. We arrived in plenty of time and the gear was set up. When the plane came over it actually flew much closer to us than we imagined it would. The noise was terrifyingly loud. We panicked and ran around vainly trying to cover up our ears. It was probably all over in 10–15 seconds but it seemed like a lot longer. Some time later I realised that I suffered from tinnitus as I still do today. It could have come from that incident (but it also could have come from a few other loud noise events I'd experienced such as a teacher who delighted in slapping me over the head at almost every year 8 maths lesson).

The year or so at FoE was the hardest I've ever worked and as a fairly driven, ambitious person who has since run an educational video business with 25 or so people employed for several decades, I don't say that lightly. At least once a month after working a 10–12 hour day we would hold a general meeting. Around 30 people would turn up to have their say. Although decisions taken were meant to be binding, we had few if any written protocols for meeting procedure. So debates would rage for hours, difficult (if not impossible) people were allowed to rant until they and everyone else were exhausted, and sometimes, next day, there would be disagreement on the actual wording of the decision arrived at. Despite that, we managed to be a pretty effective group, often on the national media, able to put out two regular magazines and multiple newsletters, capable of organising large demonstrations and using our impressive connections with leading politicians.

I have fond memories of the people I worked with, especially Peter Hayes (for a brief period), Emma Young, Alison Parks, Dick Borton (dec.) and Richard Nankin. Would I do it again? Oh yes, but a little less frenetically I would hope.

*Reprinted (with light editing) from the Friends of the Earth Australia History blog*

<http://friendsearthaustraliabistory.blogspot.com.au/>

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## 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.

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

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All Active Friends donations are fully tax deductible.



# River Country Campaign



My name is Morgana Russell and I would like to introduce myself as the new Coordinator of the River Country Campaign of Friends of the Earth Melbourne.

The Barmah-Millewa Collective has decided its time for a new name: the 'River Country Campaign'. This is an exciting evolution in our campaign, which points to a broadening effort to protect the ecosystems of the Murray-Darling Basin and to support land and water justice for Indigenous peoples.

I grew up in Swan Hill on the Murray River and was involved in the campaign to protect the River Red Gum forests from an early age, as my family was part of establishing the local Friends of Nyah Vinifera Forest group. I grew up camping in forests along the Murray River and its tributaries, enjoying swimming, canoeing, fishing and walking in these unique ecosystems.

The Nyah-Vinifera Park is an important ecological, cultural and social asset for the community of the Swan Hill-Nyah region. The park includes significant Riverine ecological vegetation classes providing habitat for a range of threatened fauna and flora species. The park is also an extremely significant cultural landscape for the Wadi Wadi Indigenous Nation, with numerous cultural heritage sites.

I was there through the almost 15 year struggle to protect the River Red Gum forests from logging, hunting and grazing. I learnt a lot as a young person in this struggle, to work alongside Traditional Owners, to fight for justice and to never give up protecting a precious place. Amazingly, through the dedication of local Aboriginal people, local environment groups and groups like Friends of the Earth, over 100,000 hectares of forest were protected in 2010. The Nyah Vinifera state forest became a regional park and was promised co-management with the Wadi Wadi people.

My deep connection to these forests and rivers was reignited last year when I was working at the Swan Hill Council as an Environment Officer. It was hard not to see the Nyah-Vinifera Park was suffering from weed infestations; once grassy clearings were now packed with metre-high

thorns. I was getting reports from locals that trailer loads of illegally cut wood were coming out of the Park regularly. I investigated with Parks Victoria and began to see the truth, that despite the Park being 'protected' in legislation, in practice it was in great danger. Danger from illegal logging, from massive weed and pest animal infestations, from lack of secure water allocations to keep the Red Gums alive, from damage to cultural sites and loss of biodiversity.

I also reached out to Wadi Wadi people and realised there had been little to no progress made since 2010 on establishing the co-management of the Park that was promised to them five years ago. We are still fighting for Indigenous management and land rights for River Red Gum forests.

Parks Victoria told me that they had no capacity to manage the Nyah-Vinifera Regional Park, other than maintaining access roads and completing some rabbit reduction works. The River Country Campaign sees this as a totally inadequate management practice which highlights the huge problem with underfunding and undervaluing of our precious forests.

The Nyah-Vinifera Park has been severely neglected for the past five years. Under the previous Coalition state government, several plans put in place to protect and manage the parks under the 2009 Victorian Environmental Assessment Council recommendations were not carried out. The fight to protect River Red Gum forests was fought by hundreds of people, who celebrated when they were 'protected' through the creation of new national and regional parks. Once the campaign was over, people believed the forests were safe into the future, but the forests have continued to be neglected.

We are extremely concerned that the values of this important Park are at risk if action is not taken. We are calling on the Victorian Labor government to uptake our recommendations to provide funds urgently needed for adequate park management including:

- New signage explaining that wood cutting and tree felling is prohibited in the Park
- Community engagement around the new regulations for the Park

*The park includes significant Riverine ecological vegetation classes providing habitat for a range of threatened fauna and flora species. The park is also an extremely significant cultural landscape for the Wadi Wadi Indigenous Nation, with numerous cultural heritage sites.*



- Monitor and prosecute illegal wood cutting in the Park
- Monitor and manage noxious weeds and pest species
- Build and maintain adequate fencing around Indigenous cultural heritage sites
- Provide at least one dedicated park ranger to manage and monitor the Park
- Conduct studies on the health and biodiversity of the Park and works to protect endangered animal habitat.

We are also calling on the Victorian government to:

- Secure and deliver allocations of environmental water to sustain the ecological and cultural values of the Park
- Consult Wadi Wadi Traditional Owners on all planned works in the Park and create a park management plan with Wadi Wadi
- Reinstate negotiations for co-management of the park with the Wadi Wadi Traditional Owners

Nyah-Vinifera Park is just one example of many forests along the Murray River that are still struggling. Our campaign will continue until all River Red Gum forests are protected from logging, hunting and grazing. Until they have secure water allocations and are well funded and managed with involvement from Traditional Owners.

Since taking on my new role in March I have been busy building a renewed campaign for environmental protection and social justice. I have:

- Met with new environment Minister Lisa Neville and key departmental staff to highlight issues the parks are still facing, to outline

our plan for improved park management, Traditional Owner involvement and asked that she re-open co-management negotiations

- Kick-started a new campaign to support Indigenous Protected Areas by producing an infographic, distributed to over 10,000 people via social media
- Coordinated a transition to a new name and logo for the campaign and brought in some stellar volunteer recruits to be involved in our work

At the end of June, the River Country Campaign and Wadi Wadi community members are hosting an event to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the creation of the Nyah-Vinifera Park. By bringing ministers and departmental staff out to the forest, we will ensure that they witness the problems facing this and other River Red Gum Parks. We will make a plan going forward to ensure forests all along the Murray River are being funded and managed well.

I see our role at Friends of the Earth as supporting Indigenous people and local groups to stand up for their forests and rivers and demand they are funded and managed to thrive, not just survive. We know healthy forests can be achieved through joint management with Indigenous groups. We will work alongside local people to campaign successfully and get outcomes.

*For more information visit the River Country Campaign webpages at [www.melbourne.foe.org.au](http://www.melbourne.foe.org.au)*

*Contact: [morgana.russell@foe.org.au](mailto:morgana.russell@foe.org.au), 0408 095 470*

## Zobi and the Zoox

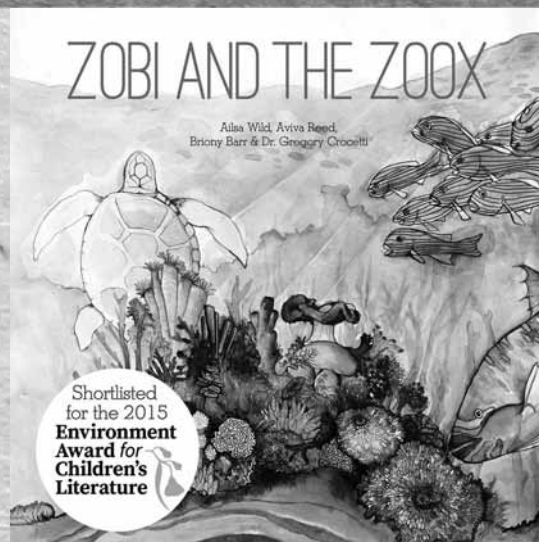
Price: \$19.95

For Ages: 7+ years

Available from:  
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Zobi and the Zoox is a new science-adventure storybook for both children and adults alike, written and produced by Ailsa Wild, Aviva Reed, Briony Barr and Gregory Crocetti. Recent shortlisted for the Environmental Award for Children's Literature (EACL), this innovative book tells the story of the microscopic friends living symbiotically within a single tiny coral polyp. With her home under threat from a warming ocean, Zobi, a brave rhizobia bacteria, teams up with a family of slow but steady Zoox (zooxanthellae). The coral becomes gravely ill and bacteria around them begin to starve. So Zobi and the Zoox have work together to try to save the day.

Zobi and the Zoox is the second in the Small Friends series: stories of symbiosis between microbes and larger forms of life. The first was



titled *The Squid, the Vibrio & the Moon*. Each Small Friends book is also a kind of symbiosis – a collaboration between writers, scientists, artists, designers and educators – initiated by Scale Free Network, an art-science collective.

David Suzuki writes: “I read the first book, *The Squid, the Vibrio & the Moon*, to my four year old grandson and he was absolutely riveted. As soon as I finished, he demanded that I read it again. He was swept up by the story, the incredible characters in it and wonders of the relationships that have evolved. I look forward to the series to come.”

# The Trans Pacific Partnership

Kieran Jairath, Michael Johnstone and Kat Moore

On April 27 Friends of the Earth's Economic Justice Collective co-organised a Union-Communities Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Roundtable event at the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) National Congress.

Union delegates, environmental organisations, lawyers, health professionals, consumer advocacy groups, religious groups, food sovereignty alliances, and politicians came together to sign off on a declaration denouncing the secrecy of Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations. The representatives of the Roundtable called on the Australian government to immediately release the secret TPP text for independent legal review and public debate or failing that for the government to withdraw Australia from the negotiations. The Roundtable further called for the removal of the Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) clause from the TPP and for the banning of ISDS clauses from all trade agreements.

The TPP is a secret 'trade deal' being negotiated between 12 countries, covering 40% of the global economy and impacting 800 million people. The contents of this deal are being kept secret from both the public and our elected representatives, until after the Cabinet has signed on. Leaked drafts of the Environment, Intellectual Property and ISDS chapters demonstrate that the TPP is in essence a 'trade deal' by corporations for corporations.

Talks around the TPP have been ongoing for over five years; the proposed trade agreement will be the broadest and most comprehensive 'free trade' deal in history. The TPP has been described by US academics as 'NAFTA on steroids'<sup>1</sup> with the monolithic proposal affecting everything from the price of medicines, indigenous rights, workers' rights, internet freedoms and agriculture to concepts such as the legal framework surrounding fracking. It is, for all intents and purposes, a global corporate coup d'état.

Naomi Klein comments on some of the ramifications of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in *This Changes Everything*, stating:



*"The significance of the NAFTA signing was indeed historic, tragically so. Because if the environmental movement had not been so agreeable, NAFTA might have been blocked or renegotiated to set a different kind of precedent. A new trade architecture could have been built that did not actively sabotage the fragile global climate change consensus ... The errors of this period cannot be undone, but it is not too late for a new kind of climate movement to take up the fight against so-called free trade and build this needed architecture now. That doesn't – and never did – mean an end to economic exchange across borders. It does, however, mean a far more thoughtful and deliberate approach to why we trade and whom it serves."<sup>2</sup>*

## Secret negotiations

Negotiations have been conducted in secrecy and as a result have drawn widespread criticism from all sides of the Pacific, with people incensed by the clandestine nature of such an extensive trade agreement. What we do know from content disclosed by WikiLeaks<sup>3</sup> is best described as sinister. Drawing on information from those leaks, as well as case studies and evidence from other treaties such as NAFTA, it is understood that the consequences of signing on to the TPP will be innumerable.

Included in the TPP are the highly controversial ISDS provisions that give foreign corporations the ability to sue our government if they believe

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environmental, public health and other policies affect their expected future profits or are a barrier to trade. The subversive effects of these provisions ties the hands of those who are in charge of creating such restrictions; if the threat of a multimillion, or billion dollar lawsuit looms overhead, the creation of such important policy will be constrained.

The ISDS clause excels at disregarding lessons from centuries of domestic law, and is instead a system that has no appeals and no precedents. It lets the parties involved select the judges for the court case who (unlike our domestic legal system) come from a pool of lawyers often employed by the very corporations mounting the cases. The arbitrators in these cases have been described as 'not public servants but private arbitrators ... there is a revolving door between serving on ISDS arbitration panels and representing corporations bringing ISDS claims'.<sup>4</sup> The broken nature of this tribunal system has meant that the United Nations and legal communities around the world are continually calling for reform.

Already we have seen the effects of ISDS lawsuits by way of the highly publicised Philip Morris tobacco case, but with the number of ISDS litigations increasing exponentially around the globe, signing on to the TPP will open the floodgates to a tide of claims that have consistently been seen to favour the corporations involved over the State.

## Environmental casualties

Sadly, one of the most frequent casualties of this corporate tribunal system is the environment. ISDS cases can range from relating to 'legislative reforms in the renewable energy sector' and 'failure to protect investments' as a UN report shows.<sup>5</sup>

A recent report investigating ISDS conducted by several organisations including Friends of the Earth Europe and the Sierra Club in the US found: "The current battle over fracking regulation provides a clear example of what is at stake. International investment tribunals are already being used to challenge a moratorium on fracking in Québec. There is little doubt that, if included in the EU-US and EU-Canada trade deals, investor protection will be used again and again to challenge further fracking bans and regulation at the national and at local level."<sup>6</sup>

These provisions undermine the ability of our government to regulate and impose bans on highly controversial and risky activities such as horizontal drilling and fracking (hydraulic fracturing), or use of toxic chemicals by the food and agriculture industries, as well as any number of other regulations for the benefit of the

community that may impact the potential future profits of the corporation in question.

At what point did the community decide to sit back and bow out of any meaningful input on matters that will detrimentally impact our future for time immemorial? This is what is happening when it comes to the process of negotiating and implementing international treaties such as the TPP. This 'free trade' agreement appears to have very little to do with trade and there is nothing free about it for the community, when the only partnership being represented is the secret love affair between governments and multinational corporations.

In the lead-up to the Unions-Communities TPP Roundtable, ACTU President Ged Kearney stated:

*"How can the community have confidence that the Government is not trading away the interests of Australians when there is a lack of available detail and stakeholders are reliant on leaks to gain a better understanding? This isn't about opposing trade or trade agreements. It's about ensuring significant concerns are addressed. We do not trust they that workers' rights will be recognised and protected, environmental standards upheld and access to quality public services maintained. We do not have confidence that these principles are being upheld in this secret process."*

## US Fast Track legislation

The international movement has recently suffered a blow, with the Fast Track legislation being passed through the United States Senate on June 23, 2015. Fast Track removes the ability to debate or amend the TPP agreement in the House of Representatives or the Senate and limits their input to a simple yes or no vote on the agreement as a whole. This diminishes the treaty process in the US to the same low level that we have in Australia, where there is no parliamentary debate on the specific details of an agreement until after it has been signed. After signing the TPP and the ratification process is complete, this agreement not only cannot be changed, it has no end date or 'sundown clause'.

This makes it much harder for politicians to reject the TPP agreement and functions as a back door for corporations to exploit people and the planet. For instance ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement), which was seen by community groups as an open attack on the internet and its users, was so flawed that it failed to get ratified in all the signatory countries bar Japan. From the leaked chapters, we can see that much of the same content that was rejected in ACTA is rearing its head again in the TPP.

With the implementation of fast track in the US and with Australia effectively already being fast tracked, it will be extremely difficult for our respective parliamentarians to challenge such draconian legislation without exposing our respective countries to ISDS tribunals.

There is good news though here in Australia; the community campaign is surging forward, with a cross community-union working group being formed on the back of the ACTU Unions and Communities TPP Roundtable, and proactive push back strategies are being formulated from all sides.

The fight against the corporate takeover of our democracy can be won. It starts with grassroots community coming together in unity and strength; the proponents of the TPP are starting to realise our power and it's terrifying them. So let's give them nightmares.

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# Occupied Palestine: The soldiers in the night ... and throughout every day

Jessica Morrison

This year I exchanged the warmth of the Australian summer for the bitter Israeli military occupation in winter, spending six weeks with a solidarity organisation in Palestine, living in the major West Bank city of Hebron.

I was volunteering with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), who have been in Hebron for over 20 years. The team is multi-faith and supports Palestinian-led, nonviolent, grassroots resistance to the Israeli occupation and the unjust structures that uphold it.

The night before I left Hebron, we were awoken in the middle of the night by a phone call from a sister organisation, the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). There were a dozen soldiers at their door demanding entrance, and ISM were keen for some back-up. My team-mate and I roused ourselves and went out into the freezing night.

We left our apartment, which stands within the ancient city streets of Hebron, and made our way along the cobbled roads. Although our destination was only a hundred metres away, our path to the house diverted around the main street of town – Shuhada Street – which has been closed off to Palestinians since a US-born Israeli settler opened fire on Palestinians praying in a mosque 20 years ago. Our path then doubled-back through an Israeli military checkpoint, where, before we were allowed to pass, the military guard demanded to see our passports. ISM is located on a hill overlooking the Old City, where particularly militant Israeli settlers have established themselves, seeking to banish the Palestinians, and often throw stones at children and torch cars to further their aims. We arrived at the base of ISM's second floor apartment, where a dozen soldiers lined the staircase to their front door, armed with equipment to break down a door. Again soldiers demanded to see our passports and a soldier shone his bright head-torch into my face. He continued to do this the whole time we were there. "Why are you here?" we asked the soldiers, and when they replied that they just wanted to talk with people, we wondered aloud whether 1am was the best time for a conversation. Of course we know "night raids" are common throughout the West Bank, with soldiers often demanding entrance to homes and for parents to get children out of bed. These raids frequently result in the arrest of a family member, including children, who can be placed in an Israeli prison without charge for months or even years.



A Palestinian boy trying to avoid tear gas.

The soldiers then asserted that ISM are terrorists, a ridiculous claim given that ISM, like CPT, is an organisation committed to supporting nonviolent resistance.

We continued to talk with the soldiers, asking them whether they thought this sort of action was bringing Israel any closer to peace. Their narrative, similar to so much of the dominant military narrative, was this was the only way, and that they're proud to be defending their country and its rights.

In this instance, the soldiers left the apartment and my colleague and I took a route home through the ancient olive trees that dotted the hill. Several of the trees bore scars of attacks and fires from Israeli settlers.

## Hebron – an ancient city

Hebron hasn't always been this way. Hebron is an ancient city, where the Bible says that Abraham bought a plot of land to bury his wife. For many centuries this city has been a pilgrimage site and, depending on which empire was in power, the building that is believed to host the grave has been a synagogue, a church and a mosque. During the Spanish Inquisition in the 15th century, a



christian peacemaker teams

number of Sephardic Jewish families settled in the city and by all reports the Jewish and Muslim communities co-identified as “Hebronites”.

The stories told by the old people are of a close interweaving of the communities, with Sephardic Jewish cheesemaking and glassblowing taken up as important local products. They all spoke Arabic and, being a fiercely conservative religious town, which it still is, are said to have protected the modesty of each other’s women, and the women wet-nursed one another’s children. It is said that when the British took over the land after World War I they were worried about Hebron, as the Jewish people and the Arabs were so tight together they might join forces in revolt against the British Empire.

However, the picture changed significantly in the early 20th century, as many Zionist Jews from Europe and the USA moved to Hebron, and throughout Palestine. Many of these Jews believed the land should be taken back by Jewish people. Because of the religious and cultural heritage of the city, it has attracted some of the most militant Zionist Jews.

In many places throughout the West Bank, the settlements were established near towns and cities. However, in Hebron, the settlements have been established in the city itself, sometimes literally on top of Palestinian houses. The violence of the Israeli settlers, and sometimes the retaliatory violence of the Palestinians, has led to a brutal militarisation of the city. The Old City of Hebron has about 40 000 Palestinians and 700 Israeli settlers living under full Israeli military control. About 2 000 soldiers are in Hebron on any day. Also under the jurisdiction of Israeli military is the adjoining settlement of Kiryat Arba, which has 8 000 settlers and is continually expanding. Adjoining the Old City is the new city of Hebron, with 120 000 Palestinians under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

## Daily harassment and humiliation

There are over 120 physical obstacles (road blocks, road closures, locked gates etc) deployed by the Israeli military in the Old City, including 18 permanently staffed checkpoints. These

checkpoints often include turnstiles and metal detectors as well as heavily armed soldiers.

The checkpoints are a cause of significant daily harassment and humiliation for Palestinians, who might be stopped several times a day for identity checks lasting 20 minutes or more. One of the main roles of Christian Peacemaker Teams, as well as other solidarity groups, is to monitor these checkpoints when children pass through to go to school, or when people are going to the mosque.

Many children are deeply frightened by soldiers, as they often arrest their relatives and friends. Soldiers often question young children on their way to school seeking to get information from them. Some children use this opportunity to throw stones at the heavily armed soldiers.

One of the most difficult things to watch is the soldiers’ responses to these children throwing stones. One option the soldiers have is to retreat into their guardhouses while this happens. But instead, they throw tear gas and sound bombs towards the schools. In the first four months of this year, at just three checkpoints, there were 108 tear gas canisters and 102 sound bombs thrown at children on their way to school.

One day I noticed boys throw some stones and soldiers go to get their sound bombs and tear gas canisters. A young girl that I estimate was five years old was walking past me and I encouraged her to move quickly through the area. However, my advice was misjudged and the first tear gas canister landed right at her feet. I tried to comfort her as she ran back towards home screaming in fear and pain. I fear that this girl didn’t return to school that week.

The settlers and their militarisation lead to much more than incidents at checkpoints. One day I answered the CPT phone to a man telling me there were soldiers in his house. They had arrived in middle of night with a military order stating they had permission to take over their home. They forced his family into one room and told him if they needed the kitchen or toilet that they needed to ask soldiers. What had this man done? Nothing. His house was just a good lookout on the road between the Palestinian neighbourhood and the Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba.

Accompanying children to school.



## Settlers from Kiryat Arba

On Friday nights, many of the settlers from Kiryat Arba walk through the Palestinian neighbourhoods on their way to pray at the mosque/synagogue that houses the grave of Abraham. Soldiers line all the streets as they pass. These settlers, many of them fully armed, walk haughtily through the neighbourhoods.

There is also a kindergarten that is part of the mosque/synagogue compound. While I was there, the principal of the kindergarten asked CPT to accompany the children to school, as they were often being harassed by Israeli soldiers or settlers on their journey. As we accompanied them, we realised that the children were being forced off the road to walk in the gutter on the other side of a fence as the road was only for Israelis.

I went to visit an old man in an adjoining village. He had goats - gorgeous long-eared goats - which were currently birthing. The week before, just before the first big snows of winter had come, the Israeli government came and demolished his nursing shed. We visited another family who had a home demolished and a water cistern that they use for their farm was being threatened with demolition. As Amnesty International has recently reported, Israel has made it almost impossible for Palestinians to do any building on their land legally, and so homes and shelters and water cisterns are often destroyed.

There is a kind old man who has a humble shop in the Old City of Hebron. It sits in the middle of the Souk, with very few visits from tourists. He creates pictures in sand in little bottles. On my last day as I came to collect sand bottles that I'd ordered, I took the time to linger with him in his shop. He found some water and boiled us some tea, poured it into plastic cups, and we talked. We talked about his despondency about the situation, the Palestinian Authority leadership, his frustration about the decisions of so many and how they are implicated in the horror of the occupation. "A desire of every parent is for each day to be better than the last," he said, "however in Hebron, for 20 years, each day has been worse than the last".



Children forced off a road reserved for Israelis.

The Israeli occupation of Palestine has now been going on for decades. The stories I've shared are part of the everyday reality of Palestinians in the West Bank. As we know from the news, often the results of living under occupation, including Gaza, are much more violent and catastrophic. The Palestinians continue to resist the occupation and work for their freedom. May our commitment to this old man and his children be that we will also join them in solidarity, so this brutal occupation won't continue on for another 20 years.

*Jessica Morrison is a member of Friends of the Earth, Melbourne, and works for the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network.*

*To join the campaign for justice in Palestine in Australia see [www.apan.org.au](http://www.apan.org.au), or to learn more about CPT see [www.cptpalestine.com](http://www.cptpalestine.com)*

Jessica Morrison (right) joining Palestinians and other internationals to plant olive trees to replace those destroyed by Israeli settlers.





# The flaw in the new White Paper for developing northern Australia

John Glue

Tony Abbott and Leichhardt M.P. Warren Entsch revealed their vision for Northern Australia for the next 15 years in their recently released Northern Australia White Paper. The White Paper predicts that by then north Australia will have a population of 6 million and that the region will have new dams, new mines, new gas fields as well as becoming a food bowl for Asia supplied from new mega-farms.

The bulldozing that has just begun of 32,000 hectares (320 sq km) of open forest at Olive Vale on Cape York, one of the most diverse natural places on Earth, is part of this plan for what the government says is 'sustainable development and innovative new crops for the north'.

In the case of Olive Vale the crop is to be forage sorghum for cattle feed and in other areas it will be crops like sugar cane, stock fed and bio-mass. This clearing was approved recently in the dying days of the last Queensland LNP government and was made possible by weakened legislation designed to reduce red tape. The impact this clearing will have on wildlife would previously have meant the project was referred to the Commonwealth under species protection laws, but it wasn't.

Fortunately the bulldozing has been temporarily stopped at Olive Vale by the urging of Queensland Deputy Premier Jackie Trad, after 2,500 hectares were cleared, while the project is assessed under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. The reasons given are that Olive Vale is home to several rare, endangered and vulnerable species and because forage sorghum for cattle feed doesn't qualify as being an innovative new crop. Another problem with these new planned mega-farms for Cape York is the Gulf of Carpentaria, the Great Barrier Reef and Cape York's river systems may be severely damaged by the added sediment, nutrient and chemical runoff that will be produced.

The recent Queensland Auditor-General's Report on the Great Barrier Reef says "efforts to repair Reef water quality are unlikely to be successful" even after multimillion-dollar programs aimed at the preventing the World Heritage Committee listing the Great Barrier Reef as being 'in danger'. The report also found "the grazing and cane industries voluntary and self-assessed schemes - introduced by the previous government to replace regulation - were not achieving changes needed to improve water quality".

Overall the Auditor-General's report finds the current efforts to cut coral-killing run-off from land degradation and over-development have been largely ineffective. This conclusion means that the government has been trying to hide

from the World Heritage Committee that the Great Barrier Reef really is 'in danger' - possibly to try to avoid the bad publicity that this would bring to Australia. This is confirmed by the latest studies showing that the Reef has lost half its coral cover in the past 30 years.

Another serious threat to the Reef is the tens of thousands of hectares of timber reserves along the North Queensland coast that were sold under a 99 year lease by the Bligh government to Hancock Queensland Plantations, managed by Hancock Timber Resource Group, the largest timber plantation company in the world, based in Boston USA.

These pine plantations use helicopters to spray a mixture of glyphosate, fluroxypyr and various other chemicals at high quantities to kill weeds or regrowth of the native vegetation. Fluroxypyr is listed on the label as being highly toxic to freshwater fish and aquatic invertebrates, and just a month ago glyphosate was reclassified by the World Health Organisation as "probably carcinogenic to humans".

The reclassification of glyphosate by the WHO is of great concern to the hundreds of towns and communities that are close to agricultural areas such as Kuranda - where the chemical run-off from their pine plantations goes into the Barron River, which is used as the town's water supply. Spray drift from aerial spraying is also a problem with homes in close proximity and the Kuranda town centre just a few kilometres away.

It is time for an end to industrial pine plantations adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area which changes diverse native forests into single species plantations - and especially if the wood is to be only used for woodchips and for low value wood products.

The fact that Australia is ranked as one of the worst countries in the world for species loss is another reason why the new Queensland Labor government needs to quickly restore strong tree clearing controls as it promised to do and especially as land clearing has tripled in Queensland over the past three years with the approval of at least 1130 sq km of bushland for clearance and the removal of protection for another 7750 sq km of remnant native vegetation.

The government is trying to avoid facing the facts that it is not possible to have a healthy World Heritage Reef, coastal fisheries and tourism industry and at the same time have intensive chemical agriculture, mass land clearing, and mega mining developments in Reef catchments.

*John Glue is a member of Friends of the Earth, Kuranda.*

# Vedanta in Tasmania: Not the corporate miner we want

Isla MacGregor

Vedanta, owner of Copper Mines of Tasmania, has been the target of the Foil Vedanta group in the UK. Foil Vedanta is a grassroots solidarity group based in London where Vedanta is registered and listed on the London Stock Exchange.

Vedanta has been referred to as the world's worst miner as a result of continuing human rights abuses, environmental destruction, widespread pollution and breaches of Occupational Health and Safety regulations for workers in numerous countries.

In 1999 the Mount Lyell mine, now known as Copper Mines of Tasmania, was acquired by Sterlite Industries – part of the Vedanta group of companies – which has operations in India, Sri Lanka, Zambia, Liberia, Namibia, South Africa, Ireland and Tasmania.

Foil Vedanta outlines its concerns about Vedanta in India:

*“The company is being opposed everywhere it operates for violations of law, pollution and human rights abuses: In Chhattisgarh up to 100 people were killed when a chimney they were constructing collapsed on workers.*

*“In Goa mine waste floods have destroyed homes, while Vedanta were found guilty of illegal mining on a massive scale.*

*“In Tamil Nadu their subsidiary Sterlite have poisoned the town with gas leaks and dumped toxic waste near people's homes.*

*“In Odisha a ten year struggle by tribal communities and farmers led to a historic victory in 2013 when Vedanta was stopped from mining the sacred Niyamgiri hills for bauxite, costing the company up to \$10 billion.”*

In Sri Lanka, according to Foil Vedanta, the company is drilling near fragile coral reefs with the support of the Sri Lankan government; while in Zambia it has poisoned one of the main rivers causing birth defects as well as depriving the Zambian government of tax revenue. In April 2015, the Supreme Court of Zambia upheld a 2011 High Court verdict which found Vedanta guilty of water pollution which poisoned thousands of Chingola residents in 2006. The High Court awarded payments to 2000 claimants who had suffered illness and liver and kidney damage as a result of drinking the water.

In February 2015, the *New York Times* profiled Vedanta boss Anil Agarwal in an article on foreign wealth flowing into New York for property buy-ups. The article states:

## **More information:**

Foil Vedanta: [www.foilvedanta.org](http://www.foilvedanta.org)

London Mining Network: <http://londonminingnetwork.org/page/14/?s=Vedanta&paged=7>

*“Mr. Agarwal and his company, Vedanta Resources, are known in some parts of the world for having left financial and environmental problems in their wake. He moved his company from India to London in the late 1990s, after it was banned from the Mumbai stock exchange for involvement in a prominent insider trading case. An Indian judge later overturned the ban, saying that there was insufficient evidence of a connection to the trading, and that India's securities regulator did not have the power to impose the penalty. The regulator is still appealing that ruling, a spokesman said.”*

## **Vedanta in Tasmania**

It is time that we start to think more carefully about which corporations, be they mining or logging, that we will allow to operate in Tasmania or anywhere in Australia.

It is time that the Tasmanian community took a stand against supporting any company that conducts itself like Vedanta. We need to move away from the piecemeal approach to conservation in Tasmania, which has to date primarily been directed at protecting Tasmania's wild areas or forests. We have a duty to support our brothers and sisters in other parts of the globe whose lives are being lost or devastated by the rapacious and unregulated conduct of large corporations.

We have to move beyond a NIMBY approach to environmental protection to one that acknowledges the need for integrated policy development on resource extraction, corporate conduct and governance, move back to independent government regulation, rebuilding public good services and government accountability based on community oversight.

As Miriam Rose from Foil Vedanta states:

*“Vedanta operates with a pattern of abuse across India and Africa which we have studied for 12 years since this company launched on London Stock Exchange. This includes de-unionising workers, increasing contract labour, operating without adequate permission, pollution incidents and illegal waste dumping, tax evasion, illegal mining, misdeclaring volumes of mined ores, high debt and high risk, and failure to enact mine closure plans.*

*“To manage risk as a result of this corner-cutting approach they tend to have high profile CSR projects – sponsoring local sports, schools, health clinics etc, as well as sponsoring politicians and other public figures.*

*“Tasmania must not become the latest victim of this company.”*

# The beauty and scourge of Tasmania's mining industry

Tasmania's clean and green image is being put under the spotlight with *Entropy 1*, a collection of images from Tasmanian environmentalist Isla MacGregor, who has had a 30-year fascination with the 'conflicted zones' of Tasmania's West Coast. Isla's images show how the uncontrolled mining of the past has left a weird and ravaged landscape and these images are beautiful and perverse at the same time. Her aim has been to bring another "truth to the art of photography of the Tasmanian landscape and the collision between human activities and our ecology."

Isla first came to Tasmania in 1979 and for a few weeks lived in the small mining town of Rosebery on Tasmania's west coast. It was against the backdrop of the stunningly beautiful Mount Murchison that Isla fell in love with Tasmania. During those few weeks she explored many of the area's legacy mine sites, and revived her passion for mineral collecting and geomorphology.

Isla seeks to explore the conflicted zone between the romanticised imagery of artists and historians, the deep connection to place felt by mining folk, and the severe degradation of the environment that follows mining activity. The evocative images of the roaster at The Tasmanian Smelters at Zeehan, set against the flayed hills, are nostalgic reminders of the hardships endured by many early mining families on the west coast.

Tasmania has over 4,000 mine sites. There are 682 abandoned mines, 215 of which are polluting over 75 waterways known to be contaminated with acid mine drainage and some with a noxious cocktail of heavy metals - a poisonous legacy for future generations.

*Isla's photo exhibition has been featured by Australian Geographic and can also be viewed at the Mining Legacies website:*

[www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/science-environment/2015/05/gallery-the-beauty-and-scourge-of-tasmanias-industrial-regions](http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/science-environment/2015/05/gallery-the-beauty-and-scourge-of-tasmanias-industrial-regions)

[www.mininglegacies.org/legacy-mines/entropy](http://www.mininglegacies.org/legacy-mines/entropy)  
In Hobart, the exhibition can be seen at Mount Wellington Restaurant, Fern Tree Tavern.



Top:  
Skeletonscape Tasmanian  
Smelter site Zeehan.

Photo by Isla MacGregor.

Bottom:  
Interior of roaster at  
Tasmanian Smelters site  
Zeehan.

Photo by Isla MacGregor.



# Semantically engineered crops

Louise Sales

Big agrochemical companies such as Dow, Bayer and Monsanto are experimenting with a range of new genetic engineering (GE) techniques that they misleadingly refer to as 'New Plant Breeding Techniques'. These are being used to introduce traits such as herbicide and pathogen resistance and changed nutritional properties into commercial crop varieties that will ultimately end up in our food. By arguing that these techniques are precise, just like conventional breeding, and not really genetic engineering at all, these companies are attempting to circumvent regulation, labelling and public opposition.

Sound familiar? Well that's because it is. These are exactly the same arguments that these companies used to defend GE crops. Only – according to industry – this time it's actually true. These new techniques include cisgenics, zinc-finger nucleases (ZFNs) and CRISPR/Cas9 (clustered regularly interspaced palindromic repeats). Much of what has been written on them has been highly technical and fairly impenetrable to the layperson – which is of course exactly the way industry wants to keep it. Where these techniques have received mainstream media attention, unfortunately journalists have largely uncritically parroted industry's claims that these techniques can be used to precisely edit DNA.

However, you don't have to delve too deep to find that – as in the case of traditional genetic engineering – industry claims don't stand up to scrutiny. Both ZFNs and CRISPR/Cas9 have been touted as precise gene editing techniques, but scientists have been reporting unexpected effects because the techniques also affect genes other than the target genes.<sup>1</sup> For example, a recent study found that CRISPR-Cas9 can result in hundreds of unexpected mutations.<sup>2</sup>

CRISPR-Cas9 received mainstream media coverage earlier this year when Chinese scientists used the technique to genetically engineer human embryos. The technique didn't work too well – prompting scientists to call for a moratorium on its use because it's not safe.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately however scientists don't seem to have similar qualms about conducting uncontrolled experiments with our staple food crops.

## So what are our regulators doing?

Most alarmingly of all it appears that these techniques are not and – on current course – may not be regulated in Australia. Furthermore, genetic engineers are arguing that these techniques are not really genetic engineering in an effort to bypass the existing regulation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

On its website dedicated to ZFN techniques (which it dubs "EzexactPrecision" technology), Dow claims: "The Australian Government, Office of the Gene Technology Regulator has responded to Dow AgroSciences stating that crops developed

using EXZACT Delete technology would not contain introduced foreign nucleic acid, once the ZFN genes are no longer present, and would not be considered GMO and not subject to regulation under the Gene Technology Act 2000."<sup>4</sup>

In 2012 our food regulator Food Standards Australia New Zealand convened an expert panel – comprised almost entirely of genetic engineers with a vested interest in the technology – to look at whether these new techniques would be considered genetic engineering. The panel concluded that: "The changes introduced using ZFN-1 and ZFN-2 [using zinc-finger nuclease to delete, substitute or insert a few base pairs] will be small, definable and the outcomes predictable. Food derived from plants modified using ZFN-1 and ZFN- 2 would be similar to food produced using traditional mutagenic techniques, and should therefore not be regarded as GM food."<sup>5</sup>

This conclusion is in marked contrast to recent research papers on the topic, which have found numerous unintended mutations in organisms modified by ZFN and CRISPR-Cas9.<sup>6</sup> As one of the researchers investigating these effects in CRISPR-Ca9 observes, "you only find things where you look for them."<sup>2</sup> It also contradicts the definition of gene technology in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. This defines gene technology as "recombinant DNA techniques that alter the heritable genetic material of living cells or organisms."<sup>7</sup>

GE proponents have also argued that cisgenics – which is genetic engineering where the introduced traits/genetic material are from the same or closely related species pose no greater risks than conventional breeding. However cisgenic techniques allow for genetic material from within the same species to be so significantly rearranged that the result could be genetic constructs and traits equally as foreign as when donor DNA from outside the species is used.<sup>8</sup>

As Professor of Genetics and Molecular Biology at Canterbury University, Jack Heinemann, points out: "The cisgeneticist is confined to no minimum string length for manipulation and thus, from the raw building blocks common to all genomes, can create strings just as "foreign" to that same genome as any that came from a different species. Any gene from a human being could be rearranged to become 2%, 50% or 70% different from itself and as different as the average gene from a human was to the average gene from a single-celled soil microorganism."<sup>9</sup>

## What kind of food future do we want?

Scientists have observed that some of the adverse effects associated with genetically engineered crops are a result of changed agricultural practices associated with the crop rather than the technology used to produce the crop variety itself.<sup>6</sup> For example a 2012 study found that

herbicide-resistant crop technology has led to a 239,000 tonne increase in herbicide use in the United States between 1996 and 2011.<sup>10</sup>

Herbicide tolerance can also be developed using non-GM techniques – but is this really the path that we want to go down? – not according to the UN. In 2013 UNCTAD, the UN trade and development body, released a publication stating that it is time for governments from all nations to change their agriculture system before it is too late. The report recommends a shift from monoculture towards greater varieties of crops, reduced use of fertilisers and other inputs, greater support for small-scale farmers, and more locally focused production and consumption of food.<sup>11</sup>

The scientists concerned about human genome editing have called for a ban and an international debate on the issue – including the public as well as experts and academics. Friends of the Earth believes this ban should be extended to the commercialisation and environmental release of all organisms modified using these techniques – until their safety and the ethics of their use can be properly assessed.

We also need a paradigm shift when it comes agriculture in Australia and a move away from the chemical treadmill being foisted on farmers by agrochemical companies such as Bayer, Monsanto and Dow. Ecological farming supports nature and people by protecting the soil, water and climate. It promotes biodiversity, ensures sustainable farming and healthy food for today and in the long-term, and does not contaminate the environment with chemical inputs or genetic engineering. They are not necessary for the growth and sustenance we need. We know what the solutions are. What is the Australian government waiting for?

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## GE 2.0 – a user guide

A range of new techniques are being used to genetically engineer plants. Here are some of the main ones:

*Cell fusion:* This involves fusing two cells from separate plants to produce a hybrid cell. It allows the genes from unrelated species to be combined.

*Oligo-directed mutagenesis:* This involves introducing molecules (oligonucleotides) that are complementary to the DNA and bind to it in all but a single or a few places. These create sequence mismatches, allowing targeted mutations to be introduced.

*Nuclease-mediated site-directed mutagenesis:* These techniques use enzymes to cut DNA at specific sites so that genes can be deleted or new genes inserted. These techniques include zinc-finger nucleases (ZFN), transcription activator-like nucleases (TALEN) and CRISPR/Cas nucleases.

*Cisgenics and intragenesis:* These terms refer to genetic engineering where the introduced traits/genetic material are from the same or closely related species.

# Green Climate Fund: Course correction needed?

Karen Orenstein and Brandon Wu

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is meant to be a new, innovative institution that will directly support climate action in developing countries, with a particular focus on the poorest and most vulnerable who thus far have had little access to climate finance.

Further, the GCF is to do this through projects and programmes that also address sustainable development and bring social, environmental, economic and gender benefits. But in July, at its penultimate meeting before the major United Nations climate summit in Paris in December, the GCF Board took decisions that flew in the face of this vision for the Fund.

In a thoroughly non-transparent process, the Board approved Deutsche Bank and several other problematic institutions as GCF “accredited entities”, meaning they are among the first 20 institutions allowed to channel GCF resources to projects and programmes in developing countries.

The GCF is supposed to have rigorous environmental, social and fiduciary standards, with zero tolerance for money laundering. Yet Deutsche Bank – the German investment giant with a well-known, deeply flawed track record on human rights, environment and financial integrity – seemed to sail through the GCF’s accreditation process.

Not only is Deutsche Bank among the planet’s top coal financiers, it has been probed, charged or heavily fined multiple times in the past year alone for money laundering, tax evasion and Libor manipulation.

Long before the establishment of the GCF, its proponents – which included throngs of civil society activists and social movements and numerous developing countries – were driven by the need to find a real alternative to the World Bank and other multilateral development banks.

In other words, they did not want an institution whose direction was dictated by wealthy countries and corporations. Now these GCF backers – including ourselves – are unsure if they’re getting what they bargained for.

Already, the GCF has accredited the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. While the GCF is supposed to be “paradigm shifting”, these international financial institutions represent the status quo – as largely donor-driven organisations that tend to build capacity for themselves rather than for recipient countries.

The GCF did make some strides in accrediting a number of national and regional entities based in developing countries, such as the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre.

It also launched a pilot programme on “enhanced direct access” to devolve decision-making power to the recipient country level. But because massive institutions like the World Bank and Deutsche Bank are already well-heeled and well-staffed, they are likely to get the lion’s share of GCF money over smaller national entities, which have less capacity and are generally accredited only to manage small-scale projects and programmes.

Instead of backing big multilateral institutions over national and subnational ones because of capacity concerns, the GCF should be prioritising capacity-building and readiness support for these smaller entities to ensure larger sums of money can flow directly to developing countries in the near future.

Part of the problem is the accreditation process itself. An accreditation panel composed of a limited number of experts performed a desk review of applicants, with a high reliance on official documents and little critical assessment of the entities’ track records.

According to the GCF secretariat’s interpretation of its interim information disclosure policy, the identity of all accreditation applicants must remain confidential until the Board approves them. This precludes NGOs and communities from sharing their vast on-the-ground experience and expertise.

The secretariat and panel apparently rely heavily on applicants’ own self-reporting to analyse track records, hardly an unbiased source. Moreover, as a result of the confidentiality policy, the actual discussion of individual applicants at the Board level was done in executive session, barring all observers.

The result: the Board approved all 13 applicants in a single package, including problematic ones like Deutsche Bank, undoubtedly based on political horse-trading involving tit-for-tat approval of applicants despite serious reservations.

Pushing through the accreditation of large international private entities and multilateral development banks via a non-transparent, politically fraught process leaves the GCF vulnerable to losing all credibility. While many of us really want to see the GCF succeed, we will not blindly support it and are demanding a change in direction.

The Board must put the GCF on a more progressive, people-centered path starting at its next meeting in Zambia this November.

At a minimum, the Board should fix its information disclosure policy so the accreditation process is fully transparent; vigorously support domestic entities in developing countries to seek accreditation and build capacity to implement ambitious projects and programmes; and approve an initial set of projects that truly meet the needs of poor and vulnerable people and the environment, rather than delivering returns for already wealthy investors.

*Karen Orenstein is a senior international policy analyst with Friends of the Earth U.S. and Brandon Wu is a senior policy analyst with ActionAid USA and is one of two civil society representatives on the Green Climate Fund Board.*



# The Catholic church confronts capitalism and technology

Jeremy Tager

*"A sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey, even as technological advances and consumer goods continue to abound limitlessly. We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and ir retrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves."*

– Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*

Pope Francis' Encyclical on the environment – *Laudato Si'* – is a powerful piece of doctrine coming from a church with a long and rather uninspiring history when it comes to both social justice and environmental care. Not only is the document a call for action on the environment and issues of social justice, it is also a lengthy and coherent indictment of neoliberalism and extreme capitalism. It recognises that the severe social and environmental problems we face are the result of a global system based on exploitation, infinite growth and profit as the greatest good.

While many commentators have focused on his call for action on climate change, equally compelling and powerfully argued is the Pope's understanding of what he calls the 'technocratic paradigm'. As the Pope argues, "To seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem which comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system."

The Pope clearly rejects the notion of technofixes and the idea that technologies will miraculously solve ecological problems without the need for ethical consideration by society itself and deep changes to the ways we live.

He recognises that technology is deeply linked to business interests and that technological products are never value neutral and purely instrumental. Instead technologies reflect the ways in which those in positions of power are shaping society – telling us, in effect, what kind of society we want to live in.

He observes that certain technologies give great power to a few at the expense of many – "an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world".

The Pope argues that we have not learned to use our power well, but "we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral."

The Pope rejects the notion that the power to make decisions regarding new technologies

legitimately rests in the hands of existing power brokers and argues that power over technology must rest in the hands of all of us.

The Pope calls for proper use of the precautionary principle – where uncertainty means that the balance of proof should shift to those who would act without clear evidence of safety.

He also calls for the proper use of law in service of societal and ecological needs. The Pope lauds environmental NGOs and calls for significantly more to be done to prevent the planet from becoming a 'pile of filth.'

The Encyclical reflects many of the concerns raised by Friends of the Earth's Emerging Technology Project regarding the failure to adopt a precautionary approach to emerging technologies. The Pope's words – spoken to over a billion Catholics – is a powerful opportunity to push further and faster for radical changes to the way we live and the way we think about technology in our lives. However, it remains to be seen whether these messages will penetrate the current deregulatory fog.

It should be said, however, that the Pope's position on biotech/GM is a bit weaker. He withholds judgement on biotechnology despite the clear evidence that it fits exactly within the technocratic paradigm he so cogently attacks. It is a technology developed and controlled by powerful corporate interests that has not reduced hunger or solved climate change – and is unlikely to.

While the Encyclical is not perfect it is far superior to any analysis coming from our major political parties. One of the ironies of the Encyclical is that the leader of a thoroughly undemocratic church shines a clear light on the parlous state of our democracy and those who claim to be our leaders.

*The Encyclical is posted at: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/index.html>*

*Jeremy Tager is a campaigner with Friends of the Earth's Emerging Technology Project.*



Pope Francis

# Four easy ways to grow renewable energy in Victoria

Leigh Ewbank

With the Abbott government sabotaging Australia's clean energy future, states such as Victoria must step up and lead on renewable energy.

On the Prime Minister's watch, investment has collapsed by 90% and over 2,500 people working in the sector have lost their job. Not content with its savage 20% cut to the national Renewable Energy Target, the Abbott government has dictated to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation that it can no longer invest in wind farms and rooftop solar power.

This is the context in which the Daniel Andrews Labor government in Victoria is developing its Renewable Energy Action Plan to grow the sector and jobs in Victoria. The Andrews government has been sending all the right signals when it comes to renewable energy. It was elected with a commitment to repeal the Baillieu-era restrictions on wind farms. And it delivered on the commitment just months after taking office.

To date, the Andrews government has provided financial support for the Newstead community in its pursuit to be 100% renewable by 2017, as well as a 30 kW community solar project in Woodend. It has also established a \$20 million New Energy Fund to encourage investment in renewable energy and clean-tech projects.

The Andrews government's Renewable Energy Action Plan is due for release later in 2015 and will build on these positive first steps.

There are some straightforward ways the Victorian government can increase renewables before it announces its comprehensive plan.

## 1. Renewable energy powered government

The Victorian government is a large purchaser of electricity. Putting a Power Purchase Agreement to tender could see it powered by renewable energy. The collective demand for electricity from all those office buildings, schools, and hospitals, etc, could be enough to see a medium-sized wind farm built. And with over 2,000 MW of wind farms already approved, there's plenty of competition among developers to deliver the best value for the public.

## 2. Renewable energy powered public transport

Putting another spin on the government signing Power Purchase Agreements, Melbourne's public transport system is another large user of electricity. So why don't we power our trains and trams with clean renewable energy?

Documents obtained by Fairfax Media in 2014 found that Metro Trains was the state's second largest carbon emitter. And the City of Melbourne says trams make up 10% of the city's transport emissions. These statistics point to the sizable renewable energy projects that would be required for a zero-emission transport system. A proposal for solar powered trams is already on the table.

## 3. Streamline wind farm planning

Victoria has a world-class wind resource and now has over 2,000MW of shovel-ready wind farms projects. The state is competing against other jurisdictions for investment, so the time it takes to assess or amend a proposal in Victoria, SA, and NSW, will decide where investors put their money. With some additional resourcing, Planning Minister Richard Wynn could streamline the planning process to make Victoria the place to invest.

## 4. Redirect fossil fuel subsidies to renewables and clean-tech

The government could supercharge its New Energy Fund by redirecting fossil fuel subsidies to renewable energy and clean-tech. Both the Grattan Institute and Alternative Technology Association have criticised the \$100 million Energy for the Regions spend on gas reticulation – a costly program the Andrews government inherited from its predecessor.

Redirecting these to advance the renewable energy and clean-tech sector is smart economics and respects the growing sentiment in the community. Some 63 regional communities across the state have declared themselves unconventional gas and fracking free.

But that's not all. According to The Australia Institute, in the six years from 2008-09 to 2013-14 the state government spent \$206 million on subsidies to the minerals and fossil fuel sector.

## Next steps

These are just a few straightforward initiatives the Andrews government can implement to grow renewable energy in the short to medium term. They would build a strong foundation for its forthcoming Renewable Energy Action Plan.

Friends of the Earth has called for the state government to re-establish a Victorian Renewable Energy Target. After all, if we don't know where we're headed, then we're unlikely to get there.

If Premier Andrews wants to make Victoria Australia's renewable energy capital, then it can look to the ACT Labor government for inspiration. It is the ACT's Renewable Energy Target of 90% by 2020 that is building the Ararat and Coonooer Bridge wind farms in Victoria.

Restored certainty on the national Renewable Energy Target combined with the ACT's wind energy auctions presents a winning formula for Victorian policymakers. A Victorian Renewable Energy Target modeled on the ACT's scheme can be a central plank of the Andrews government's plan to grow renewables.

Will the Renewable Energy Action Plan contain a Victorian Renewable Energy Target? We'll know by the end of the year.

*Leigh Ewbank is Friends of the Earth Australia's  
Yes 2 Renewables coordinator*

# Coal closures give SA the chance to go 100% renewable

Mark Diesendorf

South Australia is facing the closure of its Northern and Playford B power stations and Leigh Creek coal mine, after Alinta Energy's June 2015 announcement of its plans to shut them ahead of schedule.<sup>1</sup> It will cost 438 jobs in the coal-mining and coal-fired electricity industries. But this threat to employment could be transformed into an opportunity for creating many new jobs in renewable energy.

The South Australian electricity system could be operated entirely on scaled-up, commercially available, renewable energy sources. This is the conclusion of my report to the Conservation Council of South Australia.<sup>2</sup>

Our modelling at UNSW Australia shows that the SA system could be supplied mainly by a mix of wind power; solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, both on rooftops and in large solar farms; and concentrated solar thermal (CST) power with thermal storage. Gas-fired turbines and demand management via "smart" meters and switches would manage the infrequent small lulls in wind and solar supply.

I estimate this transition would take 15–25 years, during which time the natural gas fuel for the gas turbines would be gradually replaced by biofuels from agricultural residues – thus making the system fully renewable. There would be increased trading of electricity with Victoria and possibly over a new transmission link to New South Wales.

## Already a leader ... by Australian standards

SA is already the leading Australian state in non-hydro renewable energy, with about 40% of annual electricity consumption now coming from wind and sunshine.<sup>3</sup> SA has already shown that it can operate reliably and stably for hours when the contribution of variable renewable energy reaches two-thirds of demand<sup>4</sup>, and

in early June wind power and gas coped admirably when the coal-fired Northern power station went unexpectedly offline.<sup>5</sup>

In Europe, the idea of a state moving to 100% renewable energy would not be regarded as a controversial proposal. The north German states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern<sup>6</sup> and Schleswig-Holstein<sup>7</sup> are already operating on 100% net renewable energy, mostly from wind. The "net" indicates trading with each other and their neighbours. Although SA has transmission connections to Victoria only, it has the advantage over northern Europe that it is very sunny as well as windy.

## Bye bye baseload

Our calculations show that SA does not need any baseload power stations, such as coal or nuclear. Indeed, the lack of operational flexibility of coal and nuclear makes them poor partners for high penetrations of variable renewable energy. The SA system has already operated reliably for long periods without its coal-fired stations, as the early June incident demonstrated.<sup>8</sup>

Moving fully to renewable energy will deliver environmental, social and economic benefits. The transition would reduce SA's greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and associated respiratory diseases. It would cap electricity prices.

SA could create a wide range of new jobs in manufacturing, installation, grid connection, technical support and sales, which could help to compensate for the forthcoming job losses in its coal industry.

As for the nuclear question, the multinational financial analyst Lazard estimates the average costs of subsidized new nuclear energy in the United States in 2017 to be 12.4–13.2 US cents per kilowatt hour (kWh), compared with unsubsidized costs of 3.7–8.1 c/kWh for onshore wind, and 7.2–8.6 c/kWh for large-scale solar PV.<sup>9</sup> For Britain's proposed new nuclear power station Hinkley C, the UK government is offering a guaranteed price of 9.25 p/kWh (14 US c/kWh) increasing with inflation for 35 years. Thus new nuclear energy prices are roughly double those of onshore wind, and also higher than those for solar farms.

Compared with nuclear power, an appropriate mix of renewable energy sources is just as reliable, less dangerous, cheaper, emits less carbon dioxide overall<sup>10</sup>, offers a wider range of environmental, health and employment benefits, can be implemented much more rapidly, and is more likely to enjoy community support.

What's more, a nuclear power station (600 megawatts or more) would be too big for the SA grid system, and smaller "modular" reactor designs are not yet commercially available. Renewable energy, in contrast, is technically and economically feasible, and environmentally and socially desirable.

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# Solar: the new normal for a sunny country

Claire O'Rourke

Here's an incendiary statement: solar is ordinary. Really ordinary. In fact, it's so ordinary that these days solar has become the new normal in our homes and in our culture. Soaring uptake rates are driving sky-high engagement in clean energy that is influencing people, policy and politics in ways we have not seen before.

Solar PV was once the territory of the hardened greenie or off-grid obsessive, but these days it's as common as a BBQ on Australia Day. (Have you actually been at a BBQ where people start talking about their solar panels? If you haven't yet it's only a matter of time – you'll find people comparing feed-in-tariffs, kilowatt hours and demand shifting in intimate detail.)

In Australia right now, 1.4 million-plus rooftops sport this money-saving, planet greening technology, up from only around 14,000 systems seven years ago according to data collated by the Clean Energy Regulator.

There are a few reasons why this happened. The price of panels and other component parts dropped substantially – solar PV module costs have fallen by 75% since the end of 2009, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency. Federal policies such as the Renewable Energy Target helped reduce the price of installation and up-front investment, and state-based feed-in-tariffs gave people a payment for the electricity they fed back into the grid.

Let's consider what this new normal means. First, it's changed the way our energy is produced and consumed. Less than 10 years ago, we had a one-way system but this has been shaken up so comprehensively that rooftop solar is directly challenging business models for established industries in the way the internet challenged the media and music industries.

When people go solar their behaviour changes. Households start monitoring their electricity usage, changing lightbulbs, placing monitors on their fridges and doing away with standby power, taking the next steps in energy efficiency in homes and businesses to maximise the return on that investment. This has been dubbed as the rise of the active, engaged consumer, or the 'prosumer'.

Imagine just how much this is going to shift in the next few years, which is hinted at in a recent report from Morgan Stanley that suggests 2.4 million households in the National Electricity Market will go solar.

Storage technology is about to enter the market *en masse*, which will be an absolute game changer for solar. It will allow people to store their daytime energy and use it at night, relieving peak demand and providing consumers even

more control of electricity generation and consumption. Morgan Stanley's report also notes that Tesla may not be able to meet the anticipated high levels of demand likely from Australia for its storage product – the slickly marketed Powerwall – with a predicted 1.1 million suitable households set to line up quick-smart to take advantage of this and other storage technologies.

Second, the popularity of clean energy right now is unparalleled. An Ipsos poll released in May found 87% support for rooftop solar panels among respondents, and 78% "strongly" or "somewhat" backed large-scale solar farms. Wind farms and hydro, at 72%, also far eclipsed the backing of just 23% for coal and 26% for nuclear energy.

And is this any surprise, with solar panels acting as gigantic billboards for low power bills along most suburban streets around the nation? The evidence shows that the giant leap from rooftop PV to big solar or wind farms assumed by some politicians is actually a pretty small step.

Third, solar has created a constituency of millions of people – literally five million people – who are enjoying the relief that solar delivers to the hip pocket after years of extreme price hikes driven primarily by network charges. A recent survey of Solar Citizens supporters – which had 5,000 responses – found that 60% of respondents had saved at least 50% on their annual power charges.

Solar owners have skin in the game and want to protect their investment, this is clear. But what is less well known is that there are enough solar owners in every one of the top 25 marginal electorates to decide the outcome in those seats at the next Federal election. In some key electorates solar homes number more than 25% of all homes in that electorate.

That's why Solar Citizens welcomes Labor's pledge to take an achievable goal of at least 50% renewable energy to the next election. This goal will create at least 20,000 new jobs, help to reduce emissions, prompt innovation and encourage new business models that ensure we can protect stable, affordable electricity supplies for all who need it.

With good planning and orderly, sensible policy, people will not be left behind as the way we generate, store and trade power fundamentally changes. Most importantly it allows for a real debate around how our changing energy system will be managed and given where the country's mood is at, it's a debate politicians ignore at their peril.

*Claire O'Rourke is Solar Citizens National Director.*

*Reprinted and lightly abridged from ABC Environment, 11 Aug 2015, [www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/08/11/4290434.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/08/11/4290434.htm)*

# South Australia: The nuclear state?

Robyn Wood

Since the Royal Commission into the Nuclear Fuel Cycle was announced in February by SA Premier Jay Weatherill, the nuclear free community has come together to soundly reject the idea that SA should have an expansion of uranium mining, enrichment, nuclear energy, or host a national or international nuclear waste dump.

Friends of the Earth Adelaide members have been working closely with the Conservation Council of SA and Nuclear Operations Watch Port Adelaide (NOWPA), and helped form an anti-nuclear SA coalition to track and respond to the Royal Commission and to engage the wider community.

We had two opportunities to comment on the proposed Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission, and had a win with the commission agreeing to look at potential impacts of a nuclear industry on industries such as farming, food production, and tourism, and another win with the Commission agreeing to consider the history of the uranium/nuclear in industry in SA. FoE Adelaide made submissions in response to all four of the Royal Commission's issues papers on mining, enrichment, electricity and waste (<http://nuclearcc.sa.gov.au/information-library>), while FoE Australia joined forces with the Australian Conservation Foundation and the SA Conservation Council to produce a 250-page submission ([www.foe.org.au/royal-commission](http://www.foe.org.au/royal-commission)).

*The Australian* newspaper complained that "greenies flooded the Royal Commission with submissions" so that shows just how much support we have on our side. A survey commissioned by the Adelaide *Advertiser* (a Murdoch tabloid) found that only 15.7% of South Australians support a nuclear waste dump in the state, and only 26.6% support a nuclear power station.

FoE and NOWPA supported the Conservation Council in marking Fukushima Day on March 11 at Parliament House to acknowledge that in the four years since the accident began, the tragedy is still ongoing with the situation far from being under control. A nuclear free community picnic, sushi and poetry slam fundraiser was also held under the willows on the banks of the River Torrens to honour Fukushima Day. The winning poet was well respected Karina Lester with her poem about the impact of Maralinga nuclear weapons testing on her family. We also had a strong nuclear-free contingent at the 'March in March' parade and rally against the Abbott government.

FoE Adelaide were pleased to be able to financially assist Aboriginal people to attend an important meeting at Port Augusta in May to discuss the Royal Commission and how to respond to it. The meeting released the following statement:



*South Australian Traditional Owners say NO! Statement from a community meeting held in Port, Augusta, on Saturday 16 May 2015 to discuss The Royal Commission Into The Nuclear Fuel Cycle*

*We oppose plans for uranium mining, nuclear reactors and nuclear waste dumps on our land. We call on the SA Royal Commission to recommend against any uranium mining and nuclear projects on our lands.*

*We call on the Australian population to support us in our campaign to prevent dirty and dangerous nuclear projects being imposed on our lands and our lives and future generations.*

*Endorsed by members from the following groups, present at the Port Augusta meeting: Kokatha, Kokatha-Mirning, Arabunna, Adnyamathanba, Yankunytjatjara-Pitjanjatjara, Antikirinya-Yunkunytjatjara, Kuyani, Aranda, Western Aranda, Dieri, Larrakia, Wiradjuri.*

In July, FoE Adelaide hired a part-time anti-nuclear/pro-renewables campaigner, Nectaria Calan, for six months to November. If you can financially support our work in this important period, please visit: [www.givenow.com.au/foeadeelaide](http://www.givenow.com.au/foeadeelaide). You can follow our campaign progress on our FoE Adelaide website ([www.adelaide.foe.org.au](http://www.adelaide.foe.org.au)) and facebook page ([facebook.com/foe.adelaide](https://facebook.com/foe.adelaide))

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*Traditional Owners say NO!  
Port Augusta meeting, 16  
May 2015.*

# Our heart jiggled with joy: Celebrating one year since historic nuclear dump decision

Friday June 19 marked one year since the federal government agreed not to pursue plans for a national radioactive waste dump at Muckaty, 120 km north of Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory. The campaign opposing the dump proposal persisted for over eight years.

Traditional Owners launched a federal court case challenging the Muckaty site nomination in 2010. The court had heard evidence in Melbourne, Tennant Creek and on country at Muckaty and was due to travel to Darwin the following week when the decision to abandon the plan was announced.

Beyond Nuclear Initiative coordinator Natalie Wasley said that community members are still elated about the news, which came as a surprise amidst the intensity of the court proceedings: "One year on, there is a mixture of pride, relief and concern. The determination and resilience of the community prevailed and networks and friendships were built that will last long in to the future. Sadly, some elders who were strongly opposed to the nuclear dump passed away before hearing that the land had been protected."

Muckaty Traditional Owner Dianne Stokes said, "Everyone is feeling very happy that we won; we struggled that long to get it over and done with. It is special for us to celebrate one year and we are looking forward for the government to stay away from Muckaty and any remote area around Tennant Creek in the future. If anyone else around the country wants support to stop a nuclear dump, we will come along and help them to go against the waste. We had so much support when we were struggling, if anyone calls we will go straight there."

At the time of the announcement, Warlmanpa woman Marlene Bennett Nungarrayi said: "Today will go down in the history books of Indigenous Australia on par with the Wave Hill Walk-off, Mabo and Blue Mud Bay. The Warlmanpa Nation has won an eight-year battle against the might and power of the Commonwealth Government and Northern Land Council. Justice has prevailed and this is a win for all Territorians."

Muckaty Traditional Owners and supporters are monitoring the current site selection process for a national radioactive waste facility and will support any community that is shortlisted without full, informed consent.

Statement from Muckaty Traditional Owner Isobel Phillips:

**MUCKATY NUCLEAR WASTE  
PLAN DUMPED ONE YEAR  
AGO!**



**"We want to thank the supporters around the world that stood behind us and made us feel strong"  
Dianne Stokes Nampin**

*It has been one year, since we stopped the nuclear waste dump at Muckaty.*

*Looking back now on how we struggled, it was the hardest. Keeping it up was the worst because of the pressure that our land will be destroyed.*

*We first felt sad, heartbroken and betrayed that the government would put the nuclear waste on our country.*

*And our grief is for our elders who have passed away – they helped us but their spirit is here with us today.*

*There is one thing that we have – our culture, lore, and family connection on the land.*

*We kept going with the fight until we won our land back.*

*Our heart jiggled with joy and smiled when we heard the good news that the government was not going ahead with the nuclear waste dump on our country.*

*We jumped and we danced with excitement – what a blessing.*

*We are so happy, so strong and still smiling with pride.*

*Don't give up fighting for your land.*

*In the end, the land will not give up on you.*

*We will not give up the struggle about dumping nuclear waste on our country or on anyone else's land.*

*We believe in the land, the land believes in you.*

*You know, it will be there for you.*



# Can Australia learn from international experience in managing radioactive waste?

Anica Niepraschk

For over 20 years the Australian government has been trying to find sites to host our radioactive waste in a centralised facility: first in South Australia and then the Northern Territory. All of these attempts were flawed and ultimately failed – most recently the attempt to dispose of Australia's low-level radioactive waste and store the intermediate level waste in Muckaty, NT. In 2014 the sustained opposition by Traditional Owners and a broad alliance of civil society organisations finally resulted in the Commonwealth abandoning its aggressive pursuit of the site.

With it came the conclusion that imposing nuclear dumps on communities does not work and that a shift is needed towards a voluntarist approach. This is current international best practise and indeed a very welcome change in attitude.

In March, Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane called on landowners across Australia to nominate their land to host a radioactive waste management facility. The two-month nomination period ended in May. It is currently followed by a desk-study to evaluate the nominated sites' suitability to host the facility according to a number of social, environmental and economic factors. The resulting shortlist of sites, as well as a complete list of all nominations received, is expected to be released shortly.

It is therefore timely to have a look at what a voluntarist siting process should actually encompass and how Australia's new approach rates against that.

In a new report titled 'Wasting time? International lessons for managing Australia's radioactive waste', commissioned by the Australian Conservation Foundation, I analyse international experience in siting radioactive waste facilities. The lessons that can be drawn from this experience are of direct relevance to the ongoing Australian National Radioactive Waste Management Project.

Apart from other critical factors, the key characteristics of a successful and truly voluntarist siting process are community consent, continuous engagement with the local community throughout the duration of the project, and a flexible timeframe.

Community consent refers to a site not being declared for hosting a radioactive waste facility before the community has fully agreed to it. This could be established, among others, by a local referendum or a council decision and requires that the community can withdraw from

the process at any point of time, until the final decision is taken. This factor is the true core of a voluntarist approach to avoid imposing a facility on an unwilling community.

The community should furthermore be continuously engaged, meaning that the engagement continues beyond the siting stage into the construction, operational and closing phases of the project to ensure ongoing attention is paid to community wellbeing and ownership. Additionally, a voluntarist siting process should not set out a rigid timeframe for a decision to be taken but rather leave the community to engage in ways it finds meaningful and helpful until it feels ready to take an informed decision.

Looking at Australia, none of these factors is prominent in the current approach laid out by the Department of Industry and Science. Not only does it propose a very limited timeframe for the shortlisting of nominated sites, conducting site characterisation studies and a detailed business case to inform the final selection of a site, but it also leaves almost no room for community participation during this process. Beyond a 60-day commentary period following the announcement of shortlisted sites, most planned engagement with communities seems to be providing information rather than engaging in consultations.

Landholders can only withdraw from the process until site characterisation begins and communities as a whole seem to have no expressed right at all to withdraw or veto. In fact, community consent is not a precondition for a final site to be declared and will not have to be established at any point during the process. This entirely contradicts voluntarism and deeply undermines not only the project's character but also its likely success.

If the federal government's intention of following a voluntarist approach is sincere, it will have to take these factors into account – plus a number of other points that have proven essential and are outlined in the report. The next 12 months will show if we will once again witness a forceful attempt to deal with Australia's radioactive waste or if the government is taking its promise of voluntarism serious – and how willing it is to learn from others and its own past.

*The report, 'Wasting time? International lessons for managing Australia's radioactive waste', is posted at: [www.acfonline.org.au/resources/wasting-time-international-lessons-managing-australias-radioactive-waste---discussion](http://www.acfonline.org.au/resources/wasting-time-international-lessons-managing-australias-radioactive-waste---discussion)*

# Radioactive Exposure Tour: Red dirt, porridge and the nuclear industry

Gem Romuld

The 2015 Radioactive Exposure Tour was a multi-dimensional whirlwind dive into the nuclear landscapes of New South Wales and South Australia. We got up close and personal with Australia's only nuclear reactor, former uranium mine sites, both of Australia's two currently operating uranium mines, vast areas under uranium exploration and the five thousand kilometres of "nuclear freeway" in between.

This year's radtour packed around 25 people into two mini-buses and a ute running on vegetable oil and started with the traditional pre-dawn packing session at Friends of the Earth on Smith St, Collingwood.

Our first two nights were spent on a beautiful bush property of our friends from Uranium Free NSW. The camp at Jervis Bay was located near the site that was to be home to Australia's first nuclear power reactor under the government of John Gorton in the late 1960s. Gorton later acknowledged that there was a secret weapons agenda driving the Jervis Bay reactor project. Thankfully, a change of government dampened that sinister plan and we were able to swim the glorious waters of Jervis Bay without a nuclear reactor's shadow.

A couple of hours north we were greeted by a large contingent of staff at the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, Australia's only research reactor at Lucas Heights. We were fed promotional videos and various misinformation including "radiation is radiation", and therefore all the same. We asked lots of questions, and challenged the organisation on their role in ensuring responsible radioactive waste management. This includes preventing the manipulation of remote Aboriginal communities for a radioactive waste dump with such mythologies as the necessity of a remote waste dump for cancer patients to receive their treatments.

After some campaign history from the "Atom Free Embassy" days outside ANSTO, we high-

tailed it to the Blue Mountains in time for a public meeting in Katoomba. Eco-pella sang their ratbag tunes and we heard Donna Mulhearn's stories of acting as a human shield in Iraq and the devastating legacy of depleted uranium weapons use. After some classic group + banner photos at the Three Sisters the next morning we pushed on, heading west.

Upon our arrival in Dubbo, we walked into a fascinating collision of locals and an Alkane Resources employee at a meeting organised by Uranium Free Dubbo, discussing the proposed rare earths mine 20 kms out of town. As rare earths are typically found in conjunction with radioactive materials, the mine poses radiological risks – nearby residents would get elevated radiation exposure levels when the mine operated, and the town would be left with radioactive tailings forever and a day. Locals are worried about drinking water contamination, and doubted whether they could trust the company and what benefit they would derive from the mine.

Further west through open plains teeming with kangaroos and feral goats, we met with the thriving group "Nuclear Free Cobar" (one person) and eventually found the Broken Hill Racecourse Hall, a roof over our swags. The huge shed was somehow made cosy by the big feed that Kerry and Biscuit laid out for our weary arrival. While there are no current mine proposals, several companies have been prospecting for uranium around Western NSW.

*Ros Byass at the  
Mound Springs,  
Arabunna country, SA.*



Leaving Broken Hill meant leaving big towns for a while, and heading for the territories of the nuclear cowboys. We built our first desert camp under a full moon, en route to the Gammon Ranges. We woke, packed and left before sunrise. Emus welcomed us to Adnyamathanha country, where protest broke out against the Beverley uranium mine in its first years of operation from 1997. One particular protest was subject to a ten-year legal battle to hold the police accountable for their use of force, capsicum spray and locking nine people in a shipping container for several hours.

At the site, we had a brief tour of the controversial in-situ-leach mine before scones, tea and, of course, a Powerpoint presentation. The staff ducked and weaved through our questions, hand-balling them to each other and shying away from giving us numbers e.g. daily water usage of the mine. When questioned about the federal government's tender for a radioactive waste dump site, they said 'we think here would be a pretty good place'. Never mind what the Adnyamathanha community thinks ...

We travelled on, skirting north of the Flinders Ranges and west along the Oodnadatta Track. Now on Arabunna country, we unfortunately had to skip the famous Marree Camel Cup, an annual highlight, to make Lake Eyre for sunset.

Everything slowed down for our dreamy "Oodnadatta Day". We visited several of the mound springs, lush desert oases of endemic flora and fauna that are dependent on the natural flow of the mineral-rich waters of the Great Artesian Basin to the surface. The springs have sadly been drying up since the Olympic Dam mine started sucking 37 million litres of water per day from underneath them.

We shifted camp to the site of the Keepers of Lake Eyre camp, where Uncle Kev, Bilbo and others kept a constant watch on BHP Billiton for many years. After another incredible sunset and sunrise we had to tear ourselves away from that place for our uranium mine tour appointment at the gates of hell – Olympic Dam.

In Woomera we toured the missile park with Avon Hudson, nuclear veteran and whistleblower for the Maralinga nuclear weapons testing program. During his time working at Woomera and Maralinga he amassed a trove of damning stories and information, which we are so lucky to hear every year on the radtour.

Woomera locals Mick and Glenn shared our red dune campfire and told us some of their proud Kokatha family history of resisting uranium mining and the radioactive waste dump. Their families won the Irati Wanti campaign (the poison, leave it) more than a decade ago, and they are preparing for another campaign against radioactive waste in light of the SA Royal Commission into nuclear expansion, currently underway.

From Woomera we found ourselves in Adelaide all too quickly, with some of the tour preparing to stay for the Students of Sustainability conference and others preparing for the drive back to Melbourne. After the opening fire ceremony we heard from some of the Aboriginal champions for



a nuclear-free-world like Uncle Kevin Buzzacott, Mitch and Auntie Sue Coleman-Haseldine. Their words reinforced the relevance of the journey we'd just travelled, and the need to keep the fight alive for an end to the atomic age.

The Radioactive Exposure Tour means many different things to different people. It is an education ... of the land, of the struggles faced by Aboriginal people, a window into what happens out there when the city isn't watching and a history lesson for the future. The radtour is a temporary community that must learn to get along, to work collectively and unravel patriarchal patterns in the way we function day-to-day. While travelling thousands of kilometres, we are fermenting information, ideas and conversation. Perhaps most importantly, the radtour is one way we grow the movement, maintain connections across vast distances, spark wild ideas and fortify ourselves for the next steps. Bring it on!

*Gem Romuld is a member of FoE Melbourne's Anti-nuclear and Clean Energy (ACE) Collective and was one of the organisers of the 2015 radtour.*

*More information and photos are posted at [www.radioactivetour.com](http://www.radioactivetour.com)*

*If you'd like to register interest in next year's radtour, email use at: [radexposuretour@gmail.com](mailto:radexposuretour@gmail.com)*

*The radtour at the Students of Sustainability Conference, Flinders Uni, SA.*



# Radioactive Racism in the Wild West

Mia Pepper

You'd be forgiven for thinking Western Australia was the Wild West. The announcement from the WA government that it planned to close 150 Aboriginal remote communities came hot on the heels of plans to gut the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

The changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act have two main objectives: one is to make it easier for Aboriginal Heritage Sites on the Aboriginal Heritage Register to be de-listed; the other is to make it harder to get Aboriginal Heritage Sites listed in the first place. One of the key factors in a site getting and staying on the register is proving an ongoing connection to the site – a logistical factor made much harder if people are being forcibly removed from remote communities.

Pastor Geoffrey Stokes, a Wongutha man from Kalgoorlie, was out hunting one day near Mt Margaret when he encountered a mining company, Darlex, literally about to dig into a cave – an Aboriginal Heritage Site. This particular site had been lodged with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs by the Goldfields Land and Sea Council 23 years earlier – but had not been officially registered. The company was about to destroy the site without having gained permission or consulting with the Aboriginal custodians and had no requirements to do so because the site did not appear on the register. On inquiries made to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) about this site, it was revealed that something like 10,000 sites have been lodged but never registered.

This is how the system works. Traditional Owners can lodge a site with the DAA and the Department may or may not register it – depending how busy they are over a period of about two decades. Once it is registered a mining company can then apply to destroy it anyway, but rest assured that if it's registered you'll be consulted about the sites impending doom. However if you don't visit the site regularly, under a changed Aboriginal Heritage Act, it's likely to be deregistered aka no one is coming to talk to you before they destroy your heritage.

I'm reminded of being at a mining conference in WA where the then Minister for Mines and Petroleum gave a keynote presentation. He ended by inviting everyone to stay around for a raffle – “the prize is a free Aboriginal Heritage clearance.” The miners roared with laughter. The Minister re-used the joke when calling the raffle – allowing us to record this sick joke about the religion and culture of Australia's first people. When played back to him in Parliament, he scoffed and said it was taken out of context.

## Mulga Rocks

Just around the corner from Mt Margaret is Mulga Rocks – the site of the latest uranium mine proposal by a company, which has recently changed its name to Vimy Resources. Vimy is like an all-star cast with a former Fortescue Metals Group executive as Director, a former Liberal MP on the Board of Directors and generously funded by Twiggy Forrest. Vimy recently submitted a scoping study for Mulga Rocks, which is near Kalgoorlie and adjacent to the Queen Victoria Springs – an A Class Nature Reserve.

In submissions made to the scoping study, the DAA provided comment in response to the proposal saying the company should minimise impact to Aboriginal Heritage, should consult with the DAA and the Central Desert Native Title Service, and suggesting that some sites may “still be under the protection” of the not-yet-gutted Aboriginal Heritage Act. The company responded: “No Native Title Groups claim the areas and no traditional owners undertake any traditional activities in the area.”

That comment was based on a 1982 ‘study’ by an American anthropologist – using a dubious methodology. The anthropologist just asked around in the nearest town (150 kms away), a process that identified at least one family who use to go out, and no further inquiries were made about that family. The family survived and live in the area but are yet to be consulted. Neighbouring communities and interested communities are yet to be consulted and the company refuses to consult, stating the project won't impact anyone so there's no need.

The closest community to the proposed Mulga Rocks mine is called Coonana and has been on the government's hit list of communities to close down for many years. Slowly but surely the WA government has cut all funding to the community, which is now virtually a ghost town. Coonana is a refugee community – people that have been moved from community to community over generations. Known as the Spinifex people, they came across the border from South Australia following the nuclear weapons tests at Maralinga and Emu Field in the 1950s. The government used to kick Aboriginal people hitching a free ride west off the train but then had a bright idea: give Aboriginal people a free ride west and get them off the atomic bomb testing sites permanently. The dislocation that began during the atomic bomb tests is very much alive today.

The starving of services at Coonana should sound alarm bells about what this government is capable of doing. At Oombulgurri in the Kimberley, the strategy was to demolish houses: no resettlement, no alternative housing, nothing. As the country tries to heal from centuries of displacement and bad government policy, this government is creating another generation of displaced people.

The changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act are due to be debated in the WA Parliament in August/September 2015. The plans to shut 150 remote Aboriginal communities are much more secretive – the Premier Colin Barnett has promised consultation but refused an invitation from the Kimberley Land Council to join a joint Land Councils meeting about the closures in early 2015. Proposals to use royalties' money from the mining industry to meet the funding shortfall have been squashed by the Premier. As the mining boom crashes and the government's focus is on supporting industry rather than communities, we are expecting further attacks on communities and culture to make it easier and cheaper for mining companies to get projects off the ground.

## Discrepancies

In addition to proposed changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act, the WA government has released a draft Heritage Bill 2015, covering the protection of all WA heritage sites except Aboriginal sites of significance.

Prof. Ben Smith from the University of WA, and a spokesperson for the Australian Archaeological Association (AAA), told the ABC on August 13 that the discrepancies and contradictions between the two proposed sets of changes were “untenable”. He noted that in the new Heritage Bill, the decision to add or remove a site will remain with the minister for heritage, while in revisions to the Aboriginal Heritage Act the decision will be left with a senior public servant. “We have watering down of the Aboriginal Heritage Act,” Smith said, “whereas we have continued strength of non-Aboriginal preservation.”

The AAA also raised concerns about a “tiered approach” to fines for those who damage sites. Smith said under proposed changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act, an individual found to be damaging an Aboriginal site on their first offence will face a fine of up to \$100,000. If a corporate body is found to have damaged a registered Aboriginal site in the first instance, they will be fined up to \$500,000, with the

maximum penalty of \$1 million only levelled for repeated offenders. In contrast, the Heritage Act doesn't make provision for first and second fines – if an individual or a body corporate damages a piece of non-Indigenous state heritage, they instantly face a \$1 million fine.

Smith said: “Why would we want a tiered structure? If you damage any piece of Aboriginal heritage, you are committing a crime of great seriousness, just as if you damage any piece of Australia heritage. Why is one subject to a lesser process? It's extraordinary in an international context. How will these be perceived by UNESCO?”

Phil Czerwinski, chair of the WA Association of Consulting Archaeologists, said all heritage sites should be treated equally. “We seem to want to protect white fella heritage better than we want to protect black fella heritage,” he said.

*A petition against changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act is posted at: <http://aboriginalheritagewa.com/category/latest-news/>  
Mia Pepper is the Nuclear Free Campaigner at Conservation Council WA, and Deputy Chair of the Mineral Policy Institute.*

## Antony Hegarty supporting Martu Traditional Owners

Antony Hegarty from Antony and the Johnsons recently visited Australia to support Martu Traditional Owners in their struggle to stop the proposed Kintyre uranium mine in the WA Pilbara from proceeding. Hegarty joined Martu artists at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney for the opening display of ‘Kalyu’ (water), a painting by nine Martu artists to depict the risks the proposed mine poses to the region's precious ground and surface water.

“The painting is our home, our country. It is part of us. Our country, our homelands are under serious threat from uranium mining,” said artist Ngalangka Nola Taylor. “We need to tell people that those paintings only exist because of our obligation to our country, it is not a choice to look after it, the country is us – we just have to do it”.

Hegarty said: “My current trip to Australia has been very much motivated by my desire to help the Martu campaign against this uranium mine plan. I was honoured to be welcomed by the Parnngurr community and artists and I want to lend my voice and support to help protect country that is very important to my friends there.”

Martu resettled Parnngurr community in the 1980s as a protest camp against uranium exploration. The community remains opposed to uranium mining in the area.

“It will remain like that, with no mine. That poison is no good,” said artist Karnu Nancy Taylor. “You can't reverse what the old people have said. We're going to stop it!”

# Rehabilitating Mirarr land: Uranium mining to end at Ranger?

Lauren Mellor

Ranger uranium mine operates within the bounds of the dual World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory. The mine was established through a no-consent lease on the traditional lands of the Mirarr people in the late 1970s. Ranger is the only operating asset of Energy Resources of Australia (ERA), a subsidiary 68% owned by multinational mining giant Rio Tinto.

The Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry was set up in 1973 to consider the prospect of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers region and canvassed environmental and social impacts as well as the national interest and commercial considerations. The extensive evidence collected made it clear that the Mirarr did not wish to allow any uranium mining on their estates.

Regardless of the Mirarr's opposition, the Commonwealth accepted the Inquiry's advice that: "In the end, we form the conclusion that their opposition shall not be allowed to prevail."

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act (ALRA) excluded Ranger from the veto on mining that is a statutory option for all other ALRA landholders, and uranium mining at Ranger was given final legal approvals in January 1979 with production beginning in 1981.

Thirty years on no other mine in Australia today holds the status and notorious operating record of Ranger mine, surrounded by our largest and World Heritage listed national park. Kakadu is a site of significance for its rich cultural history. It is home to over 60,000 years of living Aboriginal culture and is host to a unique ecosystem sustaining species of flora and fauna found nowhere else.

Since the mine was imposed against their express opposition in the 1970s, Mirarr and the community at large have been given to understand that ERA is obligated to protect the environment according to Balandra (non-Aboriginal) law. Repeated assurances have been given by the Commonwealth's Supervising Scientist that environmental and health interests are protected by the Environmental Requirements of the Ranger Authorisation.

In reality the mine's record speaks for itself: 30 years of mining and over 200 recorded leaks, contamination incidents, industrial accidents and security breaches with the potential to adversely affect the environment demonstrate that ERA has failed to take care of country or to manage the health and safety of its workforce and local communities.

A series of recent developments could mean the nightmare may soon be over for this site of incredible cultural and environmental significance as ERA's plans for underground expansion have come to a grinding halt.

## Ranger: operating on the edge

Mining at Ranger's open pit ceased over two years ago and production is currently sustained by processing stockpiles. All mining and mineral processing at the site must end in January 2021, to be followed by a mandated five-year rehabilitation whereby the Ranger Project Area must be repaired to a standard acceptable for inclusion into the surrounding Kakadu National Park.

In 2013 ERA announced its intention to seek approval to construct a new underground mine to access a uranium resource known as Ranger 3 Deeps within the footprint of the existing mine. ERA then began construction of an exploratory tunnel that would allow underground access to the deposit.

Mining the estimated 34,000 tonne Ranger 3 Deeps resource would delay and complicate current plans and timelines for rehabilitation of the original site by creating 10 million tonnes of long lived low-level radioactive tailings waste. (Use of the uranium in power reactors would produce 21,990 tonnes of depleted uranium waste and 3850 tonnes of high-level nuclear waste.)

The Ranger 3 Deeps underground mine proposal was ERA's only viable plan for continued mining at the site after Ranger's reserves had been exhausted, but on June 11 ERA shocked the ASX by announcing it would not proceed to the project's final feasibility stage due to 'uncertainty over the project's economics.'

## Costs and corporate responsibility for rehabilitation

Critical to this decision was Rio Tinto's withdrawal of support for the proposed underground mine, saying in a statement it would not support any future mining at the site.

ERA's capacity – and Rio Tinto's commitment – to meet the site's rehabilitation requirements has been under a cloud since 2010 when ERA began posting successive pre-tax losses which now total \$981 million. Following the decision to abandon further work on the Ranger 3 Deeps proposal, ERA has lost 73% of its share value.

A combination of depressed uranium prices in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear accident, global market oversupply and two forced





temporary shut downs at Ranger due to mismanagement, including a major radioactive spill in December 2013, have left the company with less than \$300 million operating cashflow. At present the Commonwealth holds just 10% of the rehabilitation bond or approximately \$60 million in security and an undisclosed sum of cash bonds.

Combined, ERA's cash reserves and market value represent less than the cost of its unfunded rehabilitation liability, making any expansion project a significant financial risk.

In 2013 ERA's Chief Executive warned that the company may request a public bailout to secure rehabilitation funds if the mine was unable to return to profitability through the Ranger 3 Deeps project.

ERA's 2013 Annual Report said that "if the Ranger 3 Deeps mine is not developed, in the absence of any other successful development, ERA may require an additional source of funding to fund rehabilitation of the Ranger Project Area."

Until recent developments Rio Tinto, worth an estimated \$100 billion, had attempted to publicly distance itself from responsibility for rehabilitation, deflecting criticism by downplaying corporate ties.

At its 2014 Annual Meeting, in response to questions by concerned shareholders, Rio Chief Executive Sam Walsh claimed: "ERA is a separate public company, and the board of directors will be responsible for the affairs of that company". Walsh then further distanced himself and tried to limit

Rio Tinto's responsibility to address any financial liability by saying: "If Ranger 3 Deeps didn't proceed, there is an issue for the ERA board."

In the following 12 months Mirarr Traditional Owners and environmentalists maintained the pressure on Rio, calling for assurances that the costly and complex task of rehabilitation would not be compromised and the parent company would not walk away from its responsibilities in Kakadu.

Rio Tinto and ERA are firmly linked on Ranger through more than Rio's shareholding. A majority of ERA's Board members are directly linked with Rio Tinto and the parent company has final say over key investment and operational decisions at Ranger mine.

Rio sells ERA's product to world markets under its combined marketing authority and Rio directly appoints the ERA Chief Executive, with ERA reporting directly to Rio Tinto's Diamonds and Minerals Division.

While ERA remains a separate legal entity, it is Rio that holds the reins at Ranger. Kakadu is a threatened place of global cultural significance and unique biodiversity and Rio will be closely watched and judged on the adequacy of its commitment to the final rehabilitation of the Ranger Project Area.

With costs, time pressure and stakeholder concerns mounting, at Rio's 2015 London Annual Meeting Chair Jan du Plessis appeared to change tack, suggesting the multinational miner was concerned its reputation may be at stake over lack of commitment to rehabilitation at Ranger, saying:

A leach tank collapse at Ranger in December 2013 spilt over one million litres of radioactive slurry into the surrounding environment.

“We absolutely appreciate the need to take care of that site and to make sure it is properly rehabilitated and that it is restored in the way that people would expect from this company. I can assure you today however that should the board of ERA should at any point call a rights issue to get further capital into the company, we will follow our rights as shareholders to put further capital into the company so that they can meet their obligations.”

In June this year Rio also confirmed an offer to ERA of a “conditional credit facility” should existing or future cash reserves fail to cover the required rehabilitation effort. That condition is believed to be that no future options for mining at Ranger are considered, including abandoning the Ranger 3 Deeps proposal and negotiations with the Commonwealth over a potential mining lease extension.

At the time of writing it is not clear that ERA has accepted this condition, although the shock defection of half of ERA's Board members on June 11, including Chairman Peter McMahon and independent non-executive directors Helen Garnett and David Smith, believed to have been in support of a continuation of mining, appears to have made progress towards resolving any lingering internal tension over which option ERA would pursue.

The Mirarr have made clear that they would not support any continuation of mining at Ranger past the 2021 lease expiry. A statement released in June by the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, representing the Mirarr, reads:

*“As things stand today we will not support any extended term of mining at Ranger beyond 2021. We take this position because of our experience of 30 years of environmental and cultural impacts at Ranger and because in our talks with Rio Tinto and the Australian Government we have been given no guarantee that Ranger will be the last uranium mine in Kakadu. The Mirarr remain fundamentally opposed to Jabiluka's development. That opposition is intergenerational. We are concerned about the lack of adequate planning for Jabiluka's final rehabilitation and its incorporation into Kakadu.”*

So after 30 years of uncertainty the question is whether ERA will accept Rio Tinto's life-line in the form of a conditional credit facility, or will it be forced into bankruptcy and risk creating a long-term radioactive legacy to be managed by public funds in the heart of Australia's most recognised national park?

## Ranger's mining legacy

As the sun sets on Australia's third mining boom, the uranium industry sinks into irrelevance

against the backdrop of a rising renewable trade. As analysts weigh up the social, economic and environmental cost benefit of this latest resource rush, the closure and clean up of Ranger will be a test of our national ability to hold the extractives industry to account.

Without a publicly tested and fully costed rehabilitation plan and timeframe for closure, regional stakeholders are unable to meaningfully engage with the sometimes polarised cultural, scientific, regulatory and corporate views for the post-mining future of the Alligator Rivers region.

It is difficult to see how a best practice rehabilitation exercise could occur in a mere five and a half years between cessation of operations and relinquishment of the lease in 2026. The poor history of the Northern Territory's experimentation with uranium mining at both Rum Jungle and Nabarlek, where rehabilitation and containment efforts are still underway decades after mining ceased, does nothing for public confidence in a comprehensive clean up at Ranger.

The original Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry ruled that uranium mining at Ranger was in the national interest, yet few would argue today that the experience of imposed mining at Ranger has had a broad public benefit.

The experience of uranium mining at Ranger and the ongoing struggle to guarantee rehabilitation at the site raises many pointed questions about resource extraction in Australia and on recognised Aboriginal lands.

How can we ensure that rehabilitation is a legally binding, fully costed and planned phase of mining and not the inevitable public cost collateral?

How can resource development be effectively managed to alleviate poverty and not entrench the wealth disparity that leaves a handful with obscene profits and mining sacrifice zones and local communities with sickness?

But it is not just Ranger mine that urgently requires rehabilitation. The impacts and imposition of this hazardous form of mining on the entire Alligator Rivers region and particularly its Aboriginal population requires remediation by both the company and governments who have worked systemically over decades to ensure its exploitation.

Yvonne Margarula, Senior Mirarr Traditional Owner, summarised the experience of mining on Mirarr Country saying, “None of the promises last, but the problems always do.”

As Australia's oldest and most contested uranium mine approaches its closure date there is an opportunity for forward-looking Territory and federal governments to act rationally, to accept the uranium industry's proven unviability and to firmly close the door on this, our most controversial contribution to what remains the world's most contaminating resource trade.

Before that, there is a mine-site and a region to be cleaned up and rehabilitated, land including Jabiluka returned to its rightful owners and included in the Kakadu National Park.

*Lauren Mellor is the Nuclear Free Campaigner with the Environment Centre NT.*



# Seed Sovereignty, Food Security: Women in the Vanguard

*Seed Sovereignty, Food Security: Women in the Vanguard*

Edited by Vandana Shiva

ISBN: 9781742199566

376 pp, \$34.95

[www.spinifexpress.com.au/Bookstore/book/id=277/](http://www.spinifexpress.com.au/Bookstore/book/id=277/)

The industrial paradigm for food production is no longer viable. It is unviable because it came from labs producing tools for warfare, not from farms and fields producing food and nourishment. The industrial paradigm of agriculture has its roots in war; an industry that grew by making explosives and chemicals for the war remodeled itself as the agrichemical industry when the major 20th century wars ended. Explosives factories started making synthetic fertilisers, war chemicals began to be used as pesticides and herbicides. Whether it is chemical fertilisers, or chemical pesticides, their roots are in war. They are designed to kill. That is why thousands were killed in India, in Bhopal in December 1984, and hundreds of thousands continue to be maimed because of leaks from a pesticide plant owned by Union Carbide (now Dow Chemicals). That is also why chemicals like Roundup (glyphosate) are being implicated in new disease epidemics by scientists like Prof. Seneff of MIT, who identify the processes through which these chemicals cause harm.

This unique, international offering on an issue of critical importance today, demonstrates how women as activists, scientists and scholars are at the forefront of shaping new scientific and economic paradigms to reclaim seed sovereignty and food security across the world. Women in the North and South are leading movements to change both practice and paradigm: how we grow and transform our food. As seed keepers and food producers, as mothers and consumers, they are engaged in renewing a food system that is better aligned with the ecological processes of the earth's renewal, the laws of human rights and social justice and the means through which our bodies stay well and healthy.

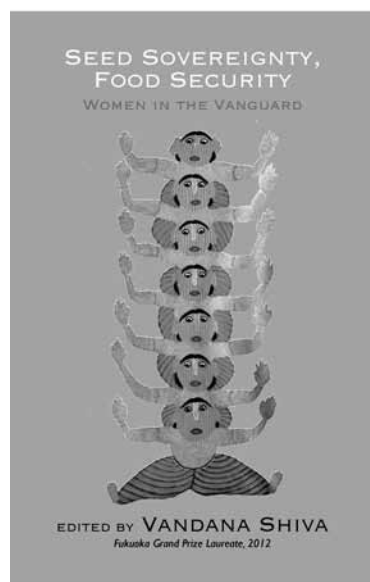
Vandana Shiva is a world-renowned environmental thinker and activist, a leader in the International Forum on Globalisation, and of the Slow Food Movement. Director of Navdanya and of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, and a tireless crusader for farmers', peasants' and women's rights, she is the author and editor of a score of influential books, among them *Making Peace with the Earth*, *Soil Not Oil* and *Staying Alive*.

Contributors write on the following topics:

**Section I: International:** Reflections on a Broken Paradigm: Fields of Hope and Power; The Ethics of Agricultural Biotechnology; Food Politics, the Food Movement and Public Health; Autism and Glyphosate: Connecting the Dots; The New Genetics and Dangers of GMOs.

**Section II: Global North:** Seed Emergency: Germany; GM Soy as Feed for Animals Affects Posterity; Seeds in France; Kokopelli vs. Graines Baumaux; If People Are Asked, They Say NO to GMOs; The Italian Context; The Untold American Revolution: History of the Seed in the US; Reviving Native Sioux Agriculture Systems; In Praise of the Leadership of Indigenous Women; Moms Across America: Shaking Up the System.

**Section III: Global South:** Seed Freedom and Seed Sovereignty: Bangladesh Today; Monsanto and Biosafety in Nepal; Sowing Seeds of Freedom; The Loss of Crop Genetic Diversity in the Changing World; Seed Sovereignty and Ecological Integrity in Africa; Conserving the Diversity of Peasant Seeds; Celebrating the Chile Nativo; Seed Saving and Women in Peru; Seeds of Liberation in Latin America; The Other Mothers and the Fight against GMOs in Argentina; Seeding Knowledge: Australia.



## Nonviolence unbound

*Nonviolence unbound*

Brian Martin

Sparsnäs, Sweden:

Irene Publishing, 2015

354 pages. ISBN 978-91-88061-03-4

Order a hard copy: [www.lulu.com/shop/brian-martin/](http://www.lulu.com/shop/brian-martin/nonviolence-unbound/paperback/product-22141716.html)

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Rallies, strikes, boycotts, sit-ins – these and other methods of nonviolent action can be used to bring down dictators. *Nonviolence Unbound* shows how insights into what makes nonviolent action effective can be applied to four completely different arenas: defending against verbal abuse, responding to online defamatory pictures, and engaging in the struggles over euthanasia and vaccination. This investigation shows how to analyse options for opposing injustice.

The book has chapters on: the effectiveness of nonviolent action; transportable features of nonviolent action; verbal defence; being defamed; euthanasia struggles; and vaccination.

The author, Brian Martin, is professor of social sciences at the University of Wollongong, Australia. He is the author of numerous books and articles on nonviolence, dissent, scientific controversies, democracy and other topics.

The book is available as a free download, courtesy of the publisher. Irene Publishing is a non-profit operation, committed to providing works relevant to grassroots social change.



# Big World, Small Planet: Abundance within planetary boundaries

*Big World, Small Planet: Abundance Within Planetary Boundaries*

Johan Rockström and Mattias Klum

2015

208pp. Hardback.

Max Ström Publishing, Stockholm

ISBN 978-91-7126-334-6

Review by David Teather

A collaboration between a world-renowned scientist and an award-winning freelance photographer has produced a gem of a book. *Big World, Small Planet* comprises 200 pages of thought-provoking text, photos and graphics. It focuses on a key issue for Friends of the Earth, the changing relationship between humans and the natural world, and demonstrates how best to communicate this to the general reader.

We've entered the Anthropocene, the era of massive human impact on the Earth. This redefines our future. Our current way of life is threatening to trigger catastrophic tipping points that could knock the planet out of the stable state that has for millennia favoured the development of our species.

The authors explore an innovative approach to this situation. They claim that neither the neo-Malthusians (who ridicule the idea of growth on a finite planet) nor the neo-liberals (who favour limitless growth) are correct. Instead they explore the middle ground, namely a future for humanity that provides abundance in a safe operating space within the boundaries set by the biophysical limits of the Earth.

They argue that this development paradigm – sustainable development leading to abundance within planetary boundaries – requires a deep mind-shift, technological transformations, system innovations, and lifestyle changes.

## Planetary boundaries

The concept of planetary boundaries was propounded in 2009 in two landmark scientific papers, a short paper<sup>1</sup> in the journal *Nature* and a fuller account<sup>2</sup> in *Ecology and Society*. Johan Rockström, co-author of *Big World, Small Planet*, also co-authored these 2009 papers with a team of leading scientists from around the world. Rockström is now the Director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre and a professor at Stockholm University.

In 2012 Professor Rockström, together with the co-author of this book, Dr Mattias Klum, wrote a much larger volume<sup>3</sup> entitled *The Human Quest: Prospering Within Planetary Boundaries*. This 2012 book, with a foreword by former US President Bill Clinton, was written to establish an authoritative baseline for debate on this novel approach to future human development. Copies of *The Human Quest*,

a 2 kg doorstopper of a book, were presented to more than 130 heads of state and government, and to delegates at the 2012 UN Summit on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro.

In the preface to *Big World, Small Planet* the authors state its purpose as follows: "The world needs a new narrative – a positive story about new opportunities for humanity to thrive on our beautiful planet by using ingenuity, core values, and humanism to become wise stewards of nature and the entire planet. ... We need a new way of thinking about our relationship with nature, and how reconnecting with the planet can open up new avenues to world prosperity."

## Our present predicament

This book is in three sections. Section 1 summarises the urgent predicament we are facing as Earth responds to the massive human impacts of the last few decades. Throughout the previous 10,000 years, the Holocene era, climatic fluctuations had been minimal and conditions for the development of human civilisations particularly benign. But recent rapid increases, in population and in affluence, are impacting the global climate and degrading the ecosystems on which our future prosperity depends.

New knowledge about the behaviour of ecosystems reveals that changes can occur abruptly when tipping points are reached. But now we also know much more about how to maintain the Earth in its benign, stable state.

The key to human survival is to keep our impacts on Earth below the biophysical limits beyond which the biosphere might flip into a different, and for us, undesirable state. Rockström calls such limits "planetary boundaries", and identifies nine such boundaries as follows:

Climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, and ocean acidification. These three are sharply-defined global thresholds, with direct implications for the whole planet.

Biodiversity loss, land-use change, freshwater consumption, and interference with the natural cycles of major nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) all undermine the resilience of the biosphere.

Air pollution (by soot and other particles), and chemical pollution of the biosphere (by heavy



metals and persistent organic chemicals) are direct consequences of human activity.

Crossing thresholds in each of these nine planetary boundaries will bring about changes on a global scale, but some effects are seen more quickly at the local and regional levels. For example, the appearance of dead zones in the Baltic Sea, caused by pollution, is prompting adjacent countries to co-operate to clean it up.

Chapter 3 focuses on local events that have global impact. Examples given included the melting of the West Antarctic ice sheet, changes in European Union fishing policies, and droughts affecting grain production in Russia and Australia. Chapter 4 focuses on global depletion of raw materials, particularly oil, minerals and phosphorus.

## New ways of thinking

Section 2 makes the case for new ways of thinking about prosperity, justice and happiness on a sustainable planet. Rockström states that in the Anthropocene our challenge "... is not about saving a species or an ecosystem. It's about saving us. It's about making it possible for humanity to continue pursuing economic development, prosperity and good lives ... It's our world that's at stake."

But the corollary of this is that it is only by saving the natural environment, upon which we wholly depend, that the future of humanity can be assured: "There can be no business in societies destabilised by abrupt social-ecological change. ... Only a stable climate and ecosystem can provide the resilience and sustainability we need to make our cities, [towns] and villages livable."

Rockström reports that a growing number of business leaders, policymakers and other citizens have reached the conclusion that the world is now facing unacceptable risks, and that we need to find ways to promote development within global sustainability criteria. In the last 5 years the conversation has moved from burden-sharing and contraction to strategies for minimising risk, generating benefits, and developing modern, high-tech solutions.

## Sustainable solutions

In Section 3 the authors offer practical solutions to the biggest challenges, such as feeding nine billion people and powering tomorrow's economies within planetary boundaries. Here are three of the many practical examples that they present:

In Sardinia biotech researchers found that vegetable oil from a prickly weed, artichoke thistle, can be converted to chemical base-products for numerous industries. An old petro-chemical plant has been converted into one of the world's most advanced and innovative green chemistry bio-refineries. This uses thistles to make bioplastics.

Farmers in southern Niger have increased productivity on five million hectares by growing nitrogen-fixing trees with agricultural crops. Biodiversity has risen, soil fertility has improved, and the landscape has become more resilient to water-related shock. And real farm incomes have doubled since the 1990s.

In parts of northern India, in order to reduce the impact on tiger habitat by villagers seeking firewood, thousands of small biogas-fuelled cooking stoves have been installed. The stoves burn methane produced from cattle dung, and in some areas fuel wood consumption has been reduced by 70%.

But at present too many such sustainable, nature-based solutions are blocked by perverse incentives and lack of clear regulation. It's too easy to plunder natural resources, ecosystems and the atmosphere for short-term economic gain. If longer-term costs were properly taken into account, such practices would cease.

By calculating the true costs of pollution and planetary abuse, and by establishing regulations that enable economic development within planetary boundaries, we can protect the Earth's remaining ecosystems without impeding development. Indeed, the authors claim, such measures would unleash innovation by making it worthwhile to invest in sustainable, nature-based solutions. Correcting massive global market failures would lead to a "good" Anthropocene.

## A synergy of science and communication

To return to the design of this remarkable book, which results from an interdisciplinary team effort encompassing science, photography, graphics and narrative.

Photography has long been employed in the service of nature conservation. Showing, as well as telling what is at stake has immediate and lasting impact. From 1965–82, photos by Olegas Truchanas and Peter Dombrovskis brought remote and inaccessible areas of Tasmania into the public realm, enhanced campaigns to save the Franklin River and, arguably, influenced the outcome of the 1983 Federal election.<sup>4</sup> Today photos of whales, migrating birds and many other species support international campaigns for their protection, and superb books provide photographic records of climate change.<sup>5</sup>

In *Big World, Small Planet* the title page is complemented by "Earthrise", the famous photo of the Earth in an ink-black sky with the moon's surface in the foreground, taken in 1968 by astronaut William Anders. Throughout this book the text is similarly complemented by more than 50 original, high-quality photos by co-author, Mattias Klum.

Do buy and read this important and beautiful book. If you find it convincing, consider who else you can encourage to read it.

### References:

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3. Rockström, J. and Klum, M. (2012) "*The Human Quest: Prospering Within Planetary Boundaries.*" 316pp. Hardback. Langenskiöld, Stockholm. ISBN 978-91-87007-14-9
4. Dombrovskis, P. and Brown, B. (1983) "*Wild Rivers.*" 128pp. Hardback. Peter Dombrovskis Pty Ltd, Sandy Bay. ISBN 978-0-670-82645-2
5. Braasch, G. (2007) "*Earth under Fire: How global warming is changing the world.*" 296pp. Hardback. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London. ISBN 978-0-520-24438-2

# How Australians were persuaded to ignore risk of climate change

*Global warming and climate change: What Australians knew and buried ... then framed a new reality for the public*

Maria Taylor

ANU Press

Australians, including Australian political leaders, were among the best informed globally and every state had an action plan on climate change 25 years ago, according to a new book by journalist Maria Taylor, published by ANU Press. Taylor's book documents the history of Australia's descent from an early highpoint of good public knowledge and will to act into confusion, uncertainty and stalemate on action.

As climate scientists issue increasingly urgent warnings of irreversible changes, particularly to the world's oceans, and with new global climate talks due in December, Australia is now seen as one of the most backward nations in terms of response. This book analyses how this happened in a country that was once at the forefront of climate knowledge.

Taylor states: "The science risk messages didn't change. What changed is the story that Australia's political leaders and the mass media together told the public. This book explores how and why a whole nation was persuaded or propagandized to ignore the risks and defend the fossil fuel status quo over a 25 year period. As a result we have a much higher burden of greenhouse gases to deal with now, than if we had acted earlier. For example, Australia in 1990 had a draft target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% below 1988 levels and was setting up programs to implement it. What happened then in the 1990s has led directly to the present day toxic politics surrounding climate change action. The current federal leadership rejection of the opportunities offered by renewables, including many jobs, and the manufactured hysteria about a pollution tax seem extreme, but fit into the thinking of the past two decades. To move forward, it helps to understand the values and beliefs and the institutions that trumped the science and blocked effective action and how it was done."

The book documents how a phony media debate can be and was created. And how 'uncertainty' was used and abused to make people forget about risk insurance they might apply elsewhere.

The book includes the story of Dr Graeme Pearman, former head of CSIRO Atmospheric Research, who played a key role in the early good communication and understanding, only to lose his job because he persisted in communicating with the public. We also hear the evidence and verdicts from government ministers, journalists, policy experts, and more scientists who played roles as this story unfolded.

*More information: [www.mariataylor.com.au](http://www.mariataylor.com.au)*

*Free electronic copies of the book are available from ANU Press in several formats:*

*PDF: <http://press.anu.edu.au/titles/global-warming-and-climate-change/pdf-download>*

*View online: <http://press.anu.edu.au/apps/bookworm/view/Global+Warming+and+Climate+Change%3A+what+Australia+knew+and+buried/11391/cover.xhtml>*

*ePub: <http://press.anu.edu.au/titles/global-warming-and-climate-change/attachment/globalbook/>*

*mobile: [http://press.anu.edu.au/titles/global-warming-and-climate-change/attachment/global-warming-and-climate-change\\_-what-australia-knew-and-buried-maria-taylor/](http://press.anu.edu.au/titles/global-warming-and-climate-change/attachment/global-warming-and-climate-change_-what-australia-knew-and-buried-maria-taylor/)*

*Hard copies can be printed on demand and purchased for \$28 plus courier shipping from the ANU Press (<http://press.anu.edu.au/titles/global-warming-and-climate-change/>).*



## The race to feed a crowded world

*The End of Plenty: the race to feed a crowded world*

Joel K. Bourne Jr.

Scribe, July 2015

RRP: \$35.00, 400pp

ISBN: 9781925106565

An award-winning environmental journalist introduces a new generation of farmers and scientists on the frontlines of the next green revolution. When Thomas Malthus famously outlined the brutal relationship between food and population, he never imagined the success of modern agriculture. New seeds, chemicals, and irrigation, coupled with free trade, drove the greatest global population boom in history — but left ecological devastation and an unsustainable agro-economic status quo in their wake. Now, with a greater number of mouths to feed than ever before, tightening global food supplies have spurred riots and reform around the world.

Author Joel K. Bourne Jr takes readers from his family farm to international agricultural hotspots, searching for new solutions that can feed us all sustainably. He visits young corporate farmers trying to restore Ukraine as Europe's breadbasket, a Canadian aquaculturist channelling ancient Chinese traditions, the agronomist behind the world's largest organic sugar-cane plantation, and many other people and groups, large and small, who are racing to stave off a Malthusian catastrophe. Part history, part reportage, part advocacy, *The End of Plenty* is a wake-up call for anyone concerned with what the coming decades will hold for our planet and its inhabitants if we don't take action.



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# HELP US CHALLENGE THE PRIVATISED UNI!



Friends of the Earth, the NTEU and the Ngarra Institute are hosting a conference on the 23rd and 24th of November at the University of Queensland, Challenging the Privatised University.

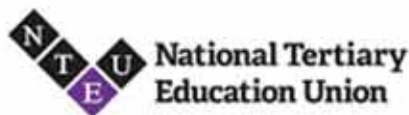
This conference will bring together academics, students and NGOs to look at the ways in which privatisation, neoliberal ideology and corporate funding and influence have changed the nature of universities from public good to private interest institutions.

But it's not just talk. The conference is also about organising and action. Join us in finding ways to reclaim and re-invent public good universities.

More details, including speakers, program and registration can be found at [www.privatiseduni.com](http://www.privatiseduni.com)



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Education Union**



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