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KNITTING NANNAS AGAINST GAS

Fossil Fool Bulletin

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

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Whitehaven Coal spews pollution into river system



Thousands of small white styrofoam balls, used in explosive blasts during mining, were found in the overflow of Back Creek following recent rain. Photo: contributed

Landholders living near Whitehaven's Maules Creek coal mine have been alarmed to find what they say is evidence the company has contaminated the local river system.

Thousands of small white styrofoam balls, used in explosive blasts during mining, were found in the overflow of Back Creek following recent rain.

Flows into Murray Darling system

Back Creek is part of the Namoi River system, which itself eventually flows into the Murray Darling System.

Local landholder Ros Druce notified NSW's Environmental Protection Agency following her discovery.

She said authorities must respond

quickly, and penalise Whitehaven to the full extent of the law if it was found to be responsible.

"This styrofoam could have long lasting negative impacts on the local aquatic ecosystem," she said.

What else went down the drain?

"We also don't know what else has been released into the river system.

"That's why we're urging an urgent investigation into whether Whitehaven has once again failed in its responsibilities to protect the community and environment that it operates in.

"This company is a repeat offender, and has no social licence left in this community."

F

Scotty from marketing locks in 30 years of gas

Prime Minister Scott Morrison's announcement at the end of January of opening up more gas will lock in 30 years of gas/LNG infrastructure and supply and hence, a very uncertain future.

Bruce Robertson, gas/LNG analyst with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) says there is a high risk these proposed investments will not see the end of their proposed lives. They will likely be left non-performing and stranded due to Australia's Paris Agreement commitments – at a huge cost to local Australians.

Morrison's deal with the New South Wales government will see more than \$2 billion invested in substantially increasing gas use.

Deliberate strategy to lock in gas

"The deal is a deliberate strategy to lock Australians into another fossil fuel – this time gas," says Robertson. "And despite what the Prime Minister asserts, more gas production will not solve the gas price problem.

The only proposed gas field in NSW at present, the Santos Narrabri gas project, has costs well above the average field in Australia and well above the current price for LNG in Asia, according to Robertson.

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• P2: Kingaroy coal plan dropped

• P3: Community group rejects Narrabri gas

P4: Coal miner will bankrupt 84-year-old

Scotty locks in 30 years of gas

• Continued from p1

“The PM must be oblivious to the fact that gas supply on the east coast of Australia has tripled since 2014 – primarily for export – and domestic gas prices have also tripled,” he said. “Producing yet more high-cost gas is no panacea to Australia’s problem of high domestic prices in a low-priced gas world currently suffering a supply glut.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has clearly shown that price fixing by gas producers has been occurring over recent years, Robertson says. The cartel of gas producers will ensure prices stay well above international prices.

“The Australian consumer of gas is paying more for Australian-produced gas than our customers in Asia. This is an unacceptable situation and the PM’s announcement this morning does nothing to fix it.”

Gas is not a transition fuel

Robertson says gas is not a transition fuel for Australia.

Local demand for gas-powered generation has fallen 41% since 2014, according to the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO).

“The Australian consumer – and developers – have moved away from gas due to its high expense and its high emissions,” says Robertson.

“There is currently no committed new investment into gas-fired power generation in Australia, and only a handful of proposed investments. All committed investment monies are in unsubsidised renewable energies, as is the vast bulk of proposed developments.”

Due to massive technological breakthroughs in battery storage, almost every project proposed now has a battery attached to it. Storage problems have been solved due to increased investment in batteries and pumped hydro.

Renewables are continually coming down in price, making gas uncompetitive – now and into the future.

Sweet deals for fossils

“The Prime Minister is playing the same game with gas as he has played with coal, making sweet deals with fossil fuel companies to the detriment of people in Australia,” says Robertson.

“We can expect more bushfires, more uncertain food supplies, more weather emergencies, and more expensive gas and electricity prices.”

Both the proposed Narrabri project and the two proposed LNG import terminals in NSW lock in 30 years of gas supply.

“Morrison is encouraging the development of fossil fuels and adding further to carbon emissions,” says Robertson. “The PM is leaving Australians, already exhausted and anxious from two months of a deadly summer, with an uncertain future, both for our climate and our energy prices.”

“As the PM knows, there are cheaper, cleaner sustainable energy alternatives available.”

“Renewables are the way forward, not high-emitting, more expensive gas.”

F

Moreton Resources withdraws plan for coal mine at Kingaroy

Landholders, the Kingaroy Concerned Citizens Group, and Lock the Gate Alliance members are celebrating this morning after it was revealed troubled company Moreton Resources had withdrawn its mining lease application for an open cut coal mine on prime farmland near Kingaroy.

“This is an incredibly important day for our local community who have been ever-vigilant and courageous in standing up to protect this priceless agricultural area from mining,” said local landholder John Bjelke-Petersen.

“The Kingaroy area contains some of the best farmland in Queensland and a mine here would have destroyed agricultural businesses, damaged water resources and put the health of the local community at risk.”

Call to extinguish licence

Although the withdrawal of the mining application is a very positive outcome for the region, Moreton still appears to hold the Mineral Development Licence (MDL 385) over the area.

The most recent Moreton statement to the ASX relating to their poor cash flow position states that they are ‘exploring divestment opportunities’ - which suggests that they may well be looking to pass the MDL on to another company.

“The Kingaroy community should not have to face any more uncertainty and it’s time the Palaszczuk Government stepped up and permanently protected the prime farming and cropping areas,” said Lock the Gate Alliance spokesperson Vicki Perrin.

“The community has so far had to fight off underground coal gasification, bauxite and now coal.

“We’re calling on the Queensland Government to extinguish the remaining MDL and urgently amend regional planning laws so that mining operations are prohibited on prime farming and cropping areas.”

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People for the Plains reject Narrabri gas

Sally Hunter, Secretary, People for the Plains Inc presented a passionate statement at the second hearing of "The implementation of the recommendations contained in the NSW Chief Scientist's Independent Review of Coal Seam Gas Activities in New South Wales".

Opening Statement

I grew up on a property north of Roma and watched as our district became a gasfield, ultimately driving out those families that could not bear the changes that were forced upon them. My parents' beef business was rendered unworkable. This played out badly for their mental health, their marriage and our farm. These are the social impacts of the industry and they were not captured by the Chief Scientist's Recommendations.

Today I am representing People for the Plains. I own a farm near Baan Baa, not far from Narrabri. People for the Plains' mission is to educate the community and advocate on the proposed gasfield.

How is it that the people who determine what level of risk is acceptable and how risks should be managed, do not have to live with that risk?

Meanwhile, the people of the north west who will be the ones to live with this risk, are not valued in the process and our voices are rarely heard. Landholders DO NOT have the legal right to say no to gas on their own land.

Narrabri is THE ONLY new gas project in the state. It is the only place that can act as a test case on whether or not the Chief Scientist's recommendations are being implemented.

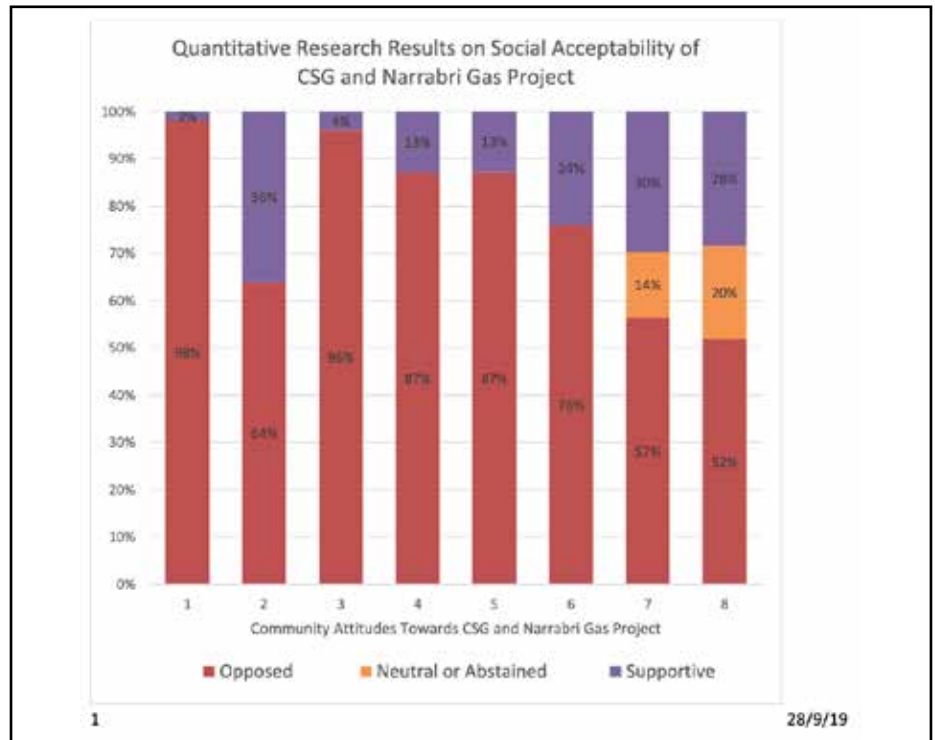
We came today to state that they are not.

Our group has had first-hand experience in the culture of the industry for the last ten years.

Questioners belittled, derided

We have experienced continual derision and belittlement of people who question the industry. With over 100 valid outstanding questions remaining unanswered by Santos, we finally resigned our seat on the community consultative committee (CCC) late last year.

We have first-hand experience of the Government's failure to fulfill Rec-



ommendation 2, "to ensure clear and open communication on CSG matters at all times."

We have watched as former Minister Harwin, our previous Barwon MP Kevin Humphries, the company and others, tell us and each other constantly that there is nothing to worry about and that everyone wants the gasfield.

I am tabling today a new report collating all the studies undertaken to date of the social acceptability of the Narrabri Gas Project. In summary, these eight data sets show between 52% and 98% of people are in opposition to the project and CSG.

Thankfully we finally have an MP in Barwon that is not afraid to speak up for this majority.

Crucial questions must be answered

There are two crucial questions that were not addressed by the Chief Scientist or the Government's actions since. Firstly, is there economic justification for coal seam gas? In this moment, imported gas is more economically viable than Narrabri gas, totally undermining the premise of the Gas Plan.

Secondly, is the north west an appropriate place for gasfields? The Government's buy back process and creation of no-go zones did not even look at the north west. The north west was drastically under-represented politically,

at that time. This meant our Petroleum Exploration Licences remained, even after they expired. None of OUR farmland, towns or water resources were made off-limits to coal seam gas, even while these types of places were declared no go zones in the North Coast, Hunter, and Illawarra.

There ARE risks from the gasfield. The Chief Scientist stated it. It has been said at the CCC meetings over the years and Santos' Mr Banks stated on SBS that he couldn't guarantee that the water and the Great Artesian Basin would not be impacted. Santos has not been able to give a guarantee that the Sulphate Reducing Bacteria found in the borewater of test holes in the gasfield, would not erode the well casings. Our landholders have been told their insurance companies WILL NOT insure them against the risks of contamination.

With the recent bushfires and terrible drought, plus predictions of increased frequency of more major natural disasters, we CANNOT afford for coal seam gas to risk our water or release obscene levels of methane into the atmosphere. The Government's failure to implement the Chief Scientist's recommendation is putting our water and our future at risk. We appeal to the Committee to help us.

- Sally Hunter

Bylong community defends IPC decision

The Bylong community, determined to protect farmland and heritage values, has applied to join legal proceedings to defend the Independent Planning Commission's (IPC) decision to reject the destructive KEPCO coal mine.

It follows a shock move last week, with the IPC announcing it was not taking an active role in defending the judicial review brought by KEPCO against its original decision.

A directions hearing into the matter was held in Sydney last week.

In September last year, the IPC ruled the risks posed by the proposed coal mine to water, land, and future generations through its contribution to climate change were too great.

However, the IPC was recently weakened following a concerted spin campaign by the NSW Minerals Council, and the withdrawal of the IPC from an active role in the case raises fears that political pressure may now reverse the planning authority's original ruling.

The Bylong Valley Protection Alliance (BVPA), represented by the Environmental Defenders Office, is now seeking to ensure the mine does not again threaten soils that are in the top 3.5 per cent in the state or put the climate at risk through dangerous downstream emissions.

Bylong farmer and President of BVPA Phillip Kennedy said, "We're shocked to hear that neither the IPC or the NSW Government are going to actively defend this case against KEPCO, and so we feel our community has been forced to step up.

"We can't believe it's left to communities like ours to defend the rule of law against mining giants in NSW. It seems bizarre for the farmland and water resources of our valley to be left defenceless.

"We have been fighting against this mine proposal for many years but what's at stake is so important to us and everyone in NSW – healthy soils, rich heritage and a safe climate."

F



Coal miner seeks to bankrupt 84-year-old

Queensland miner New Acland Coal is considering seeking hundreds of thousands of dollars in court costs from a landholder group led by an 84-year-old pensioner, ahead of a possible High Court appeal.

New Acland Coal's legal costs are understood to be over half a million dollars. The future of the legal battle depends on whether the High Court will hear an appeal.

Aileen Harrison is the president of a landholder group known as the Oakey Coal Action Alliance (OCAA), who, since 2015, has been locked in a lengthy legal battle against plans to expand the New Acland Coal mine, 180 kilometres west of Brisbane.

The group's primary concerns centre on what it says is the irreversible impact of the mine on groundwater and prime agricultural land.

In late 2019, lawyers for the New Hope Group-owned New Acland Coal

Pty, sent letters to Ms Harrison and the treasurer of OCAA, outlining their client's intention to seek legal costs.

"Well, I was a little bit astonished to think that it had come, and yes, I was stressed for a while," OCAA President Aileen Harrison said

"Then after a couple of hours of thinking about it, I thought, well, they're only trying to harass me again, which they've done to me for about 16 years."

Both Harrison and OCAA's treasurer are pensioners, and if enforced, the action would bankrupt them both.

"They brought three top barristers, [and] they need more money, well why is that our fault?" Harrison said.

• You can support Aileen Harrison with a donation here:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-me-defend-myself-from-new-hope-coal>

F

ADANI WATCH

The Bob Brown Foundation has set up Adani Watch, following the international activities and human rights transgressions of Adani. See it here:

adaniwatch-bobbrownfoundation.nationbuilder.com

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



Inside the news

Fossil Fool Bulletin was unable to publish last week due to unavoidable circumstances. This week's news summary covers two weeks of developments, with a lot of drama in fossil politics.

The **Greens** have a new leader – **Adam Bandt** – who is making an effort to reach out to coal communities and discuss the coming transition from fossil fuels (p12).

Bandt also strongly supports a fossil fuel levy to fund climate change response (p13).

Meanwhile **Barnaby Joyce** continues his fight to get back the leadership of the **Nasty Party** (or National Mining Party). Supporters include former resources minister **Matt Canavan**, who resigned his position to back up Joyce in the leadership spill (p12). Canavan has been replaced by coal and nuclear fancier **Keith Pitt**, a rabid climate-denier (p12).

A pro-coal faction – the **Otis Group** – has emerged within **Labor**, provoking anger from leader **Anthony Albanese** (p14-15).

Queensland MPs are locked in a battle to replace the clapped-out **Collinsville coal power station** with a massive new \$2 billion model. Even the generally pro-coal **Bob Katter** thinks the project is over-blown and its power output will be very expensive (p15).

Adani has copped a **criminal conviction** and a relatively small fine for a spot of illegal land clearing (p7). Activists continue to apply pressure to third-party contractors not to work on the Carmichael mine project.

Coronavirus has hit both **coal** and **gas** exporters, as ships are delayed in quarantine and China declines to take some loads. Ports and factories have closed down to stop the spread of disease (p7-8).

A NSW Parliamentary Committee looking at the Chief Scientist's **gas industry recommendations** has found that less than half have been implemented.

Independent MP **Justin Field** says the regulatory charade meant the **Narrabri** gasfield should be rejected (p9).

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In the news this week

This week Fossil Fool Bulletin has summarised 24,370 words of news for your convenience. [Click on the links](#) to view original articles. (Subscriptions may be required)

THE ADANI SAGA

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-06/adani-to-plead-guilty-court-qld/11932640>

Adani agrees to plead guilty for giving 'false or misleading documents to an administering authority'

Josh Robertson & Jessica Rendall, ABC, 06/02/2020

Mining giant Adani is set to receive the first criminal conviction in its corporate history over documents it gave to Queensland's environmental regulator about land clearing on its mine site.

Adani has agreed to plead guilty to giving "false or misleading documents to an administering authority", according to the court file and sources familiar with the case.

It faces a fine of up to \$3 million if convicted under the Environmental Protection Act.

According to notes in the court file made by Magistrate Stephen Courtney and seen by the ABC, the matter is "to be [a] plea of guilty".

In court papers, the Department of Environment and Science (DES) has alleged Adani in March 2018 filed its annual return with a graph declaring it cleared no land on the Carmichael mine site, north-west of Clermont, in 2017-18.

On September 6, 2018, conservation group Coast and Country raised land clearing allegations with the State Government, citing satellite imagery.

State and federal environment department officials then inspected the site within days.

Almost two weeks later, Adani amended its return to declare a total of 132 hectares cleared, including 5.8 hectares in the reporting period.

An Adani Mining spokeswoman said the department had "chosen to prosecute Adani Mining for an administrative error ... which we self-reported".



Craig locked on to a cattle grid at an Adani work site and prevented around 30 people from working for four hours. Photo: Frontline Action on Coal

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/feb/06/adani-receives-criminal-conviction-for-misleading-queensland-government-over-land-clearing>

Adani receives criminal conviction for misleading Queensland government over land clearing

AAP/Guardian, 07/02/2020

Prosecutors have called for Adani to be fined \$25,000 for giving the Queensland government false or misleading information about land clearing.

It is the first criminal conviction against Adani in Australia. The company has blamed an administrative error.

The charge carries a maximum penalty of \$3m, but prosecutors are seeking a fine of about \$25,000.

The offence has prompted calls from the Greens for the federal government to revoke the coalmine's approval.

"A criminal conviction is a legal trigger for the federal government to review and revoke Adani's approval," Greens senator Larissa Waters said. "If the government keeps ignoring Adani's breaches, it's just one rule for coal donors and another for ordinary Australians."

In 2017, Adani's Abbot Point coal facility was fined more than \$12,000 for releasing water during Cyclone Debbie that contained eight times more sediment than allowed.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/adani-fined-for-land-clearing-reporting-error/news-story/988f8a00fa49596e1cb15099dccc0fd8>

Adani fined for land-clearing failure

Charlie Peel, Aus, 06/02/2020

Mining giant Adani has been fined \$20,000 for failing to properly declare to the Queensland Government the extent of land clearing on its site in the Galilee Basin.

The company will also pay about \$6000 in legal and investigative costs but avoided having a criminal conviction recorded after a sentencing hearing in the Brisbane Magistrates Court on Thursday morning.

Adani pleaded guilty to the charge of providing misleading documents in its 2017-18 Annual return to the environment regulator.

Magistrate Courtney said Adani was a "good corporate citizen" with no prior criminal convictions. Anti-Adani activists who attended the hearing were deflated after the judgment. "Well that

was disappointing,” one remarked outside the courtroom.

Prosecutor Stephen Keim said the error pointed to a “systemic failure” within the company and asked for Adani to be fined \$25,000 out of a possible \$2.8 million.

Australian Conservation Foundation campaigner Christian Slattery said the “small” fine would not act as a deterrent.

The Environmental Defenders Office and advocacy group Coast and Country released a joint statement, calling on the Queensland Government to revoke Adani’s right to mine.

“The fact a conviction was not recorded does not obscure the fact Adani has been convicted of a criminal offence for the first time in Australia,” the statement said.

The Greens pre-emptively called on Adani to be stripped of its Galilee Basin Environmental Authority because of a “criminal conviction”.

“A criminal conviction is a legal trigger for the Federal Government to review and revoke Adani’s approval,” Greens Senate Leader Larissa Waters said.

“Adani will be criminally convicted today, yet it is still in line for public subsidies.”

<https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/crime-court/antiadani-protesters-ordered-to-leave-by-police/news-story/b78369aa87f2abe0bf1e6a17e9215c4b>

Anti-Adani protesters ordered to leave by police

Keagan Elder, Townsville Bulletin, 05/02/2020

Eleven protesters were issued a move on order by police after protesting out the front of Adani’s Townsville office.

An elderly woman locked on to a hand rail by the neck.

Frontline Action On Coal said 75-year-old Barb Nielsen, of Brisbane, was concerned about the impact of climate change so had decided to lock herself to a guard rail outside.

“I know that new coal is the last thing the world needs. I want to make my case clearly and directly and so have brought it to the front door of Adani’s headquarters in Queensland,” she said.

She refused to free herself after police issued the move on order. She was arrested and taken to the Townsville Watch House and is expected to front court at a later date.

COAL ROCKS ON

<https://www.afr.com/companies/mining/australian-ports-beef-up-virus-protections-20200205-p53y1j>

Australian ports beef up virus protections

Peter Ker, AFR, 05/02/2020

Australian ports will not welcome vessels from China unless they have been at sea for more than 14 days, while local marine pilots have been told to wear surgical masks to limit the spread of coronavirus.

The beefed-up advice for those working in Australian ports could add slight delays to trade of Australian iron ore and coal, given that the sailing time between China and Australia’s biggest commodity ports can be as short as 10 days.

While Australian cargo ports can largely insulate themselves against the virus by preventing foreign crews from disembarking, marine pilots are a point of vulnerability, given they must board foreign ships shortly before arrival.

Marine pilots have expert knowledge of local ports and are helicoptered out to foreign vessels to guide them on the final part of their journey into harbour.

The emergence of coronavirus during the traditional Chinese New Year holiday period has given Australian iron ore and coal exporters a stay of execution, given most Australian exporters were not expecting to ship significant volumes into Chinese ports during this period.

Most Australian coal and iron ore miners have so far noticed no material impact on the flow of their commodities.

<https://www.dalbyherald.com.au/news/coal-ship-detained-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/3937361/>

Coal ship detained amid coronavirus fears

Tegan Annett, Gladstone Observer, 05/02/2020

The health of a crew member onboard an international coal ship, anchored off Gladstone, is being monitored amid the global coronavirus outbreak.

The bulk carrier Ultra Bellambi left China on January 19 and was due to dock at Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal this week.

But the vessel has been forced to remain at anchor off Gladstone after the captain reported a crew member had recently had flu-like symptoms.

CFMEU mining and energy unit district vice-president Shane Brunner said the onus should not be on ship captains to provide information about the health of their crews.

“The pressure these companies and agents are putting on the captains is going to lead to a breakdown in our quarantine standards,” Brunner said.

Instead the union wants biosecurity to inspect every ship before it arrives at port.

<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/6613391/south-korean-company-writes-off-bylong-valley-coal-mine-project/>

KEPCO says Bylong mine proposal has no value after refusal in September

Joanne McCarthy, Newcastle Herald, 07/02/2020

The South Korean energy company that spent a decade trying to start a coal mine in Bylong Valley has written off the project and nearly 700 million



© Daniel Antunez
MarineTraffic.com

The coal carrier Ultra Bellambi is detained off Gladstone due to fears a crew member has corona virus. Photo: Marinetráfico.com

Australian dollars. KEPCO's board marked down the value of its Bylong mining rights from \$Aus642 million to zero in a report to the South Korean stock exchange in early January, despite the Australian arm of the company seeking a judicial review against the coal mine's refusal in September.

The South Korean state-owned company has also marked down the value of the 13,000 hectares of Bylong Valley land it owns between Denman and Mudgee by \$45 million, after paying \$115 million for properties since 2010, when it paid more than \$400 million for the mining licence.

The announcement was a "terrible outcome for the valley" after years of upheaval and trauma ending with the mines refusal in September, said NSW Greens MP David Shoebridge.

He said the NSW Government needed to "step up and call on KEPCO to surrender the mining licence" because "a dead fossil fuel project is effectively sterilising the region".

"No one is willing to invest in environmental restoration or farm infrastructure while there is constant threat of it all being wiped off the map by a coal mine," Shoebridge said.

Bylong Angus bull and stock feed farmer Peter Grieve, who has had property at the southern end of Bylong Valley since 1963, said the latest KEPCO move was typical of what locals had experienced since the company bought the mining licence from Anglo American in 2010.

"My life's been buggered round for seven years because they wanted a 700-acre part of my property. I would think the sensible thing to do now is for them to sell the properties on an individual basis. There'd certainly be people interested, but the place looks like hell. There's not even security there now," Grieve said.

"It's the uncertainty of not knowing where you're going that's been the worst of it."

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-10/coal-miner-be-comes-climate-change-activist-after-38-years/11937230>

Queensland miner Grant Howard faces the challenges of being a miner and a climate activist

Angel Parsons & Melanie Groves, ABC, 10/02/2020

From coaldust and heavy trucks to a communal garden and Stop Adani posters, one miner in Queensland's north is trying to strike a balance.

Grant Howard's activist friends say they don't see any conflict between what he does for a living and how he feels about the environment

Howard says he has been criticised by some of his colleagues, but believes that fighting climate change is up to everyone

For almost 40 years, Grant Howard has worked as a coal miner at the Bowen Basin, one of Australia's largest coal reserves.

Now, when he is not at work, he is learning how to be a climate activist.

Howard said he had wondered if it was possible to campaign against an industry he was financially dependent on.

"I did have to mull it over a lot, and indeed question my own employment," Howard said.

"It has been a great job.

"Every day was an adventure – that's how I describe working in a coal mine."

He said it was a challenging balance to strike, but he had chosen to continue working while spending his spare time being more involved in climate activism.

<https://southburnett.com.au/news2/2020/02/13/moreton-confirms-withdrawal-to-asx/>

Moreton Confirms Withdrawal To ASX

South Burnett.com.au 13/02/2020

Moreton Resources informed the ASX on Thursday of the withdrawal of its Mining Lease Application for its proposed Kingaroy coal mine.

CEO and Managing Director Phillip Bryant said the company has agreed to withdraw the Mining Lease Application lodged over a portion of the company's South Burnett Coal Project (MLA 700015).

The company will retain the Mineral Development Lease (MDL 385) and Exploration Permit For Coal (EPC 882) as this is a significant project with coal resources and economic value.

OIL & GAS LEAKS

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-fracking-narrabri-is-no-solution-for-cheaper-energy-or-cutting-emissions-20200206-p53yeh.html>

Why fracking Narrabri is no solution for cheaper energy or cutting emissions

Bruce Robertson, SMH, 07/02/2020

Gas is back on the national agenda. A deal between the Prime Minister and NSW Premier asks the state to "target"

production of "an additional 70 petajoules" of gas a year in return for \$960 million in federal grants or loans – to be matched by \$1.01 billion in funding from the NSW government – to upgrade interstate power transmission capacity.

Santos has been seeking the right to extract coal seam gas from a site near Narrabri in Western NSW. The project is slated to produce – coincidentally? – 70 petajoules of gas a year.

In announcing the deal, Scott Morrison claimed Narrabri's gas was "critical" to increasing Australia's energy supply, and that we needed the gas to lower domestic power prices and reduce emissions.

None of this will occur.

The Prime Minister said we must get the gas out from under our feet to lower domestic gas prices. Once again, he is wrong. More gas will not lower prices.

Since 2014, gas production has tripled on the east coast of Australia. Prices have also tripled. More gas production will not solve the price problem.

High-cost gas fields such as Narrabri cannot compete on the global stage. By selling this gas to Australian consumers, gas producers can export their low-priced gas, filling company pockets with profits. The Australian consumer is left effectively subsidising gas companies.

What would the Prime Minister's deal provide? A loss for the Australian gas consumer and a win for Santos.

• *Bruce Robertson is an LNG/gas analyst with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.*

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/chinese-coronavirus-lockdown-hits-lng-coal-exporters/news-story/7d5772f94a12086852fd7fe257b0c89d>

Chinese coronavirus lockdown hits LNG, coal exporters

Perry Williams, Aus, 06/02/2020

Australian LNG and coal exporters face a nervous wait amid expectations China may cut imports as the outbreak of the coronavirus dampens demand for fuels.

Both the Woodside Petroleum-operated North West Shelf plant in Western Australia and Shell's QCLNG venture in Queensland could take a potential blow after one of their major customers, China's CNOOC, told buyers it would not take delivery of some LNG contracts.

CNOOC's decision to declare force majeure on some supply deals, which have yet to be specified, could hit export cargoes from the two LNG projects at a time of oversupply in the market which has pushed spot prices to near-record lows.

Any move by other Chinese importers to also call on the emergency clause could spiral into a major risk for Australia's gas export industry which supplied 46% of Chinese LNG in the 2019 financial year.

PetroChina was reported by Bloomberg to have delayed LNG imports for a number of its cargoes with its terminals running at lower capacity due to a drop in available workers resulting from the coronavirus.

Australia's \$70bn coal export industry also faces a mixed picture as the effects of containing the virus filter through to producers.

"In the near-term, because of the coronavirus, coal demand will fall," S&P Global Ratings said in a briefing on Thursday. "That coal demand weakness will surely impact China's coal imports and that will likely affect Australian coal producers."

The 14-day quarantine on Australian vessels that leave mainland China after February 1 could cause delays and bottlenecks at the Queensland LNG port of Gladstone which typically receives ships every few days for loading. Similarly, the number of ships waiting near the giant Newcastle coal port in NSW has risen to 20, Argus Media reports.

<https://www.afr.com/companies/energy/lng-tensions-erupt-over-virus-claims-20200207-p53y5a>

LNG tensions erupt over virus claims

Angela Macdonald-Smith, AFR, 10/02/2020

Tensions between LNG producers and importers in the oversupplied and virus-hit Asian market have dramatically escalated as exporters hit back against moves by Chinese players to renege on purchase commitments.

The market was shocked last week when China National Offshore Oil Corporation, the country's biggest LNG importer, advised some suppliers it wouldn't take delivery of contracted cargoes in February and March because of the coronavirus. This has heightened worries that Australian LNG producers could be hit if other Chinese gas buyers follow CNOOC's move.

The energy giants were backed by

some analysts who also cast doubt on the validity of any declarations of "force majeure" by Chinese buyers, suggesting the move was a negotiating tactic to try to force lower prices in the contract market, where some prices are about triple rock-bottom spot rates.

<https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/6618469/less-than-half-of-csg-recommendations-put-in-place-by-govt/>

Less than half of Chief Scientist CSG recommendations put in place by gov't

Jamieson Murphy, Northern Daily Leader, 06/02/2020

Less than half of the coal seam gas recommendations made to the NSW government have been put in to practise, independent politician Justin Fields says.

A parliamentary committee is investigating whether the 16 recommendations made by NSW Chief Scientist five years ago, which she said would allow the industry to operate safely, have been implemented.

Field, who sits on the committee, labelled the government's CSG plan a "facade".

By his count, nine of the recommendations were either incomplete, partially complete, inadequate or abandon entirely.

Field said the government shouldn't consider any CSG developments, including the Narrabri Gas Project, until it had implemented all the recommendations.

"They've had 5 years to fix this and they've failed," he said.

"The Narrabri project should be rejected and the state can focus on building the renewable energy we need for communities and industry.

The parliamentary committee is expected to release its draft report regarding the implementation of the recommendations in the coming weeks.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/tax-hike-on-gas-and-oil-on-cards-to-save-surplus/news-story/80728e8d4e4ee0c0b425cd543b770d84>

Tax hike on gas and oil on cards to save surplus

Dennis Shanahan, Aus, 07/02/2020

The Morrison government is looking at raising the \$1.4bn-a-year tax on the gas industry in a bid to replace falling revenue and protect future budget surpluses.

Federal Treasury is considering lifting the taxes on Australia's liquefied natural gas producers – now the largest exporters of LNG in the world – as income from the 40-year-old tax is forecast to fall by \$450m over the four-year budget estimates.

Treasury is also working on recasting the tax, which has raised more than \$100bn since it started, because the industry has in large part shifted from Tasmanian Bass Strait oil production to LNG production in Western Australia's North-West Shelf. This means many projects pay no petroleum resource rent tax.

Major LNG producers in Western Australia are alarmed at the prospect of an increase in their tax burden and the impact of tax collection changes on existing multi-billion-dollar projects.

Treasury is expected to complete its review and make recommendations for change, which could include aspects of retrospectivity, within weeks.

Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association executive director Andrew McConville said the crucial role of gas in Australia's economy should not be jeopardised for short-term budget gain.

<https://www.frasercoastchronicle.com.au/news/climate-warning-on-proposed-wa-gas-hub/3944172/>

Climate warning on proposed gas hub

Fraser Coast Chronicle, 13/02/2020

Climate activists have launched a fresh campaign against Woodside's massive proposed gas hub in Western Australia, warning it will be the nation's biggest polluter.

The Conversation Council of WA (CCWA) says if the \$50 billion Burrup Hub liquefied natural gas development goes ahead, it will produce billions of tonnes of carbon emissions over its lifetime and undermine Australia's global commitments.

Plans for the mega-project about 400km north of Broome centre on the development of the Browse offshore gas field via the existing North West Shelf and Pluto gas plants.

BHP, Chevron, BP and Shell are among the joint venture partners in the various components of the ambitious development.

The CCWA has released a new report claiming that if the Burrup Hub development goes ahead, it will produce four times as many annual carbon

emissions as Adani's proposed Carmichael coal mine.

"This report raises the alarm that the Burrup Hub is an extremely risky venture that will do enormous damage to our climate and environment with very few benefits for West Australians," CCWA director Piers Verstegen said on Thursday.

NUKE MADNESS

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/qld-mp-keith-pitt-plans-to-use-new-cabinet-position-to-advocate-for-nuclear-power/news-story/8454a2fde3189bd-2f8e706eca1719e3>

QLD MP Keith Pitt plans to use new Cabinet position to advocate for nuclear power

Matthew Killoran, *Courier-Mail*, 07/02/2020

Nuclear power will have a strong voice in Cabinet with Queensland and advocate Keith Pitt elevated to the frontbench.

Pitt has been campaigning for Australia to look at nuclear power as an option since the election, while Senator Matt Canavan whom he replaces has long talked down the prospects.

It comes as a government-led energy committee recommended a partial lifting of the ban on nuclear power in Australia to allow the latest generation plants to be considered.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said there was no change to the government's position on nuclear power.

Labor's energy spokesman Mark Butler said the government should "come clean ... let Australians know which regions are in his nuclear firing line."

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/sup-port-for-nuclear-energy-heating-up-across-government-20200207-p533yru.html>

Support for nuclear energy heating up across government

Mike Foley, *SMH*, 08/02/2020

Liberal and Nationals MPs are urging the Morrison government to tackle the politically thorny issue of nuclear energy, arguing its potential as a zero-emission source of baseload power is too tempting to ignore.

Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, inner-city Melbourne Liberal MP Katie Allen said Australia has a "unique opportunity" to help lead the way on research and development of "safer and more effective" nuclear energy.

Queensland LNP MP Ted O'Brien, who represents the Fairfax electorate on the

Sunshine Coast, chaired a parliamentary committee which last year tabled a report titled *Not without your approval: a way forward for nuclear technology*, calling for a partial lift in Australia's 20-year-old nuclear moratorium.

Coalition MPs on the government-dominated committee who endorsed the report were Trent Zimmerman, from inner-city electorate North Sydney, Bridget Archer from Bass in northern Tasmania, Nationals MP for Lyne David Gillespie, West Australian MP Rick Wilson and North Queensland Nationals MP Keith Pitt, who was this week promoted to cabinet as Resources Minister.

Former deputy prime minister and Nationals leader Barnaby Joyce has also promoted nuclear energy.

Advocates argue nuclear power production costs can fall with new technology, highlighting the emerging technology of small to medium-sized reactors. However, there are no commercial examples of the new technology in operation.

Labor MPs issued a dissenting report which said the inquiry heard from experts who argued renewable energy offered better prospects to replace fossil fuels and the safety record of nuclear energy made it too risky to consider.

CLIMATE CRISIS

<https://www.crikey.com.au/2020/02/06/saltbush-club-part-one/>

Bush logic: behind the influential group fuelling climate denialism

What is the climate-denying Saltbush Club — and who's on the member roll?

David Hardaker, *Crikey*, 06/02/2020

With the public debate increasingly muddled by misinformation and vested interests, *Crikey* takes a look at the influencers shaping public perceptions – and political action – against faster action tackling climate change.

Named after the arid climate plant that naturally captures and stores carbon dioxide, The Saltbush Club brings together veterans of Australia's climate sceptic-denialist movement, clustered around the formidable figure of Hugh Morgan, one-time CEO of Western Mining and Liberal Party grandee.

Morgan has a long record of influencing conservative government climate policy through pro-fossil fuel and free market groups such as the Lavois-

ier Group and the Institute of Public Affairs.

Other big names in the Saltbush ranks include former BHP head Jerry Ellis, Melbourne geology academic Ian Plimer, Queensland mining millionaire and serial lobby group participant Viv Forbes, business luminary Sir Roderick Carnegie and prominent blogger and science communicator JoNova (real name Joanne Codling).

Co-founder and chairman Jerry Ellis said he hoped "the new leadership of the Australian government has the courage to guide our country in a rational manner ... and abandons the Paris Treaty".

Saltbush has a long and detailed shopping list of demands, some of which have already been embraced by the Morrison government.

The group argues that rather than "wasting community savings on low-density intermittent green energy" Australians should ensure essential infrastructure such as water supply, roads, rail lines, airports and power supply is better able to survive the droughts, floods, cyclones and bushfires "that will inevitably recur".

This is a position close to that set out by Morrison at his recent National Press Club speech.

Saltbush Club founder Hugh Morgan, characterises the Paris accord as a deception. "People think the Paris Accord is just about commitments to lower CO₂," he says. "It is really about transferring wealth through the UN to the so-called less developed countries".

For Morgan, the UN's climate work was about "advancing centralised control of people's lives on a global scale".

<https://www.crikey.com.au/2020/02/06/forget-emissions-where-alt-climate-ideas-grow/>

Forget emissions, it's all about the fuel: where alt-climate ideas grow

David Hardaker & Georgia Wilkins, *Crikey*, 06/02/2020

The Institute for Public Affairs (IPA) is perhaps the best-known of Australia's free market think tanks, though its funders are a closely-kept secret.

The institute has "concluded" that hazard reduction and fuel loads are "clearly" the primary issue in the spread of bushfires and that the government needs to get rid of the red tape which has got in the way of clearing vegetation.

Other active groups include:

- The Bushfire Front, a Western Australian outfit that argues for better techniques for managing fires and denies the role of climate change in the bushfire crisis.

- The Green Shirts Movement which describes itself as a grassroots movement that is “not aligned politically” but has ties to the National Party and represents a powerful new voice in the modern climate-denialism movement.

- Queensland farm lobby AgForce.

- Australian Environment Foundation – while it might sound like a greenie group, it has been claimed that the foundation was started as a front organisation for the IPA.

- Volunteer Fire Fighters Association – closely associated with former Shooters and Fishers Party candidate Mick Holton. The group hammers the theme that the real cause of catastrophic bushfires is fuel load mismanagement, not climate change.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/08/big-polluters-again-allowed-to-lift-emissions-without-penalty>

Big polluters again allowed to lift emissions without penalty

Adam Morton, Guardian, 08/02/2020

Mining and heavy industry companies, including BHP and Alcoa, have again been allowed to lift their greenhouse gas emissions without penalty under a climate change policy that the Australian government promised would prevent national pollution increasing.

Under changes posted online on Thursday, BHP coalmines in Western Australia and Queensland, Alcoa’s Portland aluminium smelter in Victoria and a Boggabri coalmine in New South Wales were each given the green light to emit more under the scheme known as the “safeguard mechanism”.

Of those made public, the allowed increases ranged between 3% to 33% above previous emissions limits. Not all the increases were published.

The Australian Conservation Foundation found increases approved over the past two years alone allowed more than 7m tonnes of potential extra emissions each year – about 1.3% of annual national carbon pollution.

The increases allowed under Thursday’s changes, including those from a new Jemena gas pipeline between Tennant Creek and Mount Isa, are at least 236,658 tonnes a year.

Bret Harper, director of research

with energy and carbon consultants RepuTex, said it showed the safeguard mechanism was a “pretty ineffective policy”.

<https://www.thefifthestate.com.au/articles/nsw-can-have-water-or-fossil-fuels-but-not-both/>

NSW can have water or fossil fuels but not both

Willow Aliento, Fifth Estate, 06/02/2020

Decisions to push ahead with coal and coal seam gas (CSG) projects in NSW and Queensland are entirely at odds with ensuring good management of water supplies and reducing carbon emissions.

Last month, credit rating agency Moody’s warned that water supply pressures and climate risks posed a genuine, long-term challenge to NSW’s credit rating.

The agency noted that drought and bushfires have disrupted economic output, and pointed to real challenges ahead in terms of water supply.

In addition to drought and fire, Sydney’s water catchment is under threat from the expansion of coal mining. A halt on new project approvals was announced in October last year but it’s only temporary at this stage.

The 2013 “Water Trigger” amendment introduced into the federal EPBC Act – the nation’s core environmental protection legislation – is supposed to ensure coal and coal seam gas (fracking) projects are independently assessed for their impact on water resources.

However, it is hard to find any examples of projects knocked back on the grounds of water impacts. As RMIT hydrogeology lecturer Matthew Currell said in an article at The Conversation in 2013, the federal agenda has been to fast-track approvals of new projects, which would appear to defeat the purpose of the Water Trigger.

“Most of the proposed mines will affect groundwater; in many cases from aquifers already used by people and important ecosystems,” Currell said.

The lack of concern for water resources is also evident in last week’s agreement between the NSW government and the federal government to increase CSG production across the state.

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/new-csiro-aemo-study-confirms-wind-solar-and-storage-beat-coal-gas-and-nuclear-57530/>

New CSIRO, AEMO study confirms wind, solar and storage beat coal, gas and nuclear

Giles Parkinson, Renew Economy, 06/02/2020

An updated study on current and future generation costs by the CSIRO and the Australian Energy Market Operator confirms that wind, solar and storage technologies are by far the cheapest form of low carbon options for Australia, and are likely to dominate the global energy mix in coming decades.

The first report, GenCost 2018, identified that wind and solar were by far the cheapest forms of new generation technologies, clearly cheaper than coal, and even when combined with storage, remained easily the cheapest form low carbon electricity options.

A draft of the updated study, GenCost 2019-20, has been quietly posted on the AEMO website and confirms that wind and solar and storage remain the cheapest technologies, now and into the future, and much cheaper than the technologies promoted by the Australian government – gas, carbon capture, and nuclear.

The study is jointly funded by the CSIRO and AEMO, although CSIRO took carriage of the report, along with advisors Aurecon, who succeeded GHD which did the first version.

FOSSIL POLITICS

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/07/witnesses-fight-back-tears-at-nsw-inquiry-into-anti-climate-scope-3-emissions-law>

Witnesses fight back tears at NSW inquiry into ‘anti-climate’ scope 3 emissions law

Lisa Cox, Guardian, 07/02/2020

Community group members and public health professionals have fought back tears while calling on the New South Wales government to drop “anti-climate” legislation that would limit planning authorities’ ability to block fossil fuel developments.

Several witnesses became emotional while giving evidence to a parliamentary hearing into the proposed laws, which are designed to stop planning authorities from rejecting or imposing conditions on projects based on their impacts overseas, including overseas emissions.

It is in part focused on scope 3 emissions, which are emissions that occur

after coal or gas is sold into the market and burned. Because Australia exports much of these resources, many of these emissions occur overseas.

The NSW Minerals Council lobbied the state government in 2019 to change laws that require the Independent Planning Commission to consider these emissions when assessing a project.

“What I find so insulting, so wilfully ignorant that it leaves me white hot with anger, is that this government and some within its departments are so easily bullied by the fossil fuel lobby to even think of introducing an anti-climate bill while Australia is burning,” [activist] Julie Lyford told the hearing.

Lyford is the president of Groundswell Gloucester, which argued in the Rocky Hill case that the mine would have a detrimental impact on climate change and the social fabric of the town.

“The proponents of this bill are climate criminals. They will be held to account one day if this bill goes through,” she said.

Dianne Montague, a member of Groundswell Gloucester, told the hearing rural communities disproportionately bore the impacts of mining and were now also “the ones bearing the burden of the impacts of climate change”.

She said the community had been living with smoke from nearby fires for months.

“Depression is everywhere. Everybody you talk to is depressed because of what’s happening,” she said.

Doctors told the hearing that the bill was a step backward in planning for health risks from fires and other extreme events associated with climate change.

Other speakers identified major concerns with the wording of the bill, telling the committee it could have unintended consequences.

This included the NSW Minerals Council, which has been pushing for these changes.

Both the council and the CFMMEU said they supported the “intent” of the bill but were not sure if it achieved its stated purpose.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/07/adam-bandt-the-greens-must-provide-hope-there-is-an-exit-strategy-from-climate-catastrophe>

Adam Bandt: the Greens must provide hope there is an exit strategy from climate catastrophe

Katharine Murphy, Guardian, 07/02/2020

For the first time in the party’s history, the leader of the Australian Greens sits in the House of Representatives, not in the Senate. If you have to hold a lower house seat (Melbourne) at every election, Adam Bandt says, you have to listen, and you have to be plugged in to the practical concerns of your constituents.

Preaching beyond the converted includes trying to connect with coal communities, where opposition to the post-material evangelism and sloganeering of green politics can be visceral.

Bandt has been out in coal communities for the past couple of years, talking about the transition to low-emissions energy, in places like Lithgow and Maitland. “There would be the guys in the high vis vests sitting in the front row with their arms crossed, staring at me all the way through the presentation, and then at the end, they’d come up and say I don’t agree with everything you are saying, but at least you are the only one being honest with us,” he says.

<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2020/02/06/barnaby-joyce-warns-pm-rebel-nationals/>

Barnaby Joyce warns PM that rebel Nationals trio could block legislation

Samantha Maiden, New Daily, 06/02/2020

Just days ago the National Party assured the nation “the shenanigans are over”, but now Barnaby Joyce has confirmed they have only just begun as he warned Scott Morrison his band of rebel supporters could cross the floor and block government legislation.

The former deputy prime minister confirmed to The New Daily that he had warned the Prime Minister on Thursday that the cabinet reshuffle has punished his supporters and risked creating a dangerous bloc of votes in Parliament.

The PM’s slim majority in the House of Representatives of just two votes could now be challenged by at least three Nationals MPs – Barnaby Joyce, George Christensen and Llew O’Brien – who he warned were prepared to vote down government legislation.

The decision not to reinstate former

resources minister Matt Canavan to the ministry after he resigned “pending the leadership ballot” to support Joyce had angered the group.

In October, Senator Canavan was involved in a fiery clash with the Prime Minister over a coal-fired power generator where he allegedly turned the air blue shouting, “This is f—ed” at the PM.

On Tuesday, when McCormack narrowly won a ballot against Joyce, he was asked if he would reinstate Senator Canavan in the cabinet.

In response, he pointedly said he “thanked Senator Canavan for his service”.

When he announced his new front-bench, Senator Canavan was not part of it.

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/pro-coal-pro-nuclear-anti-renewables-mp-is-australias-new-resources-minister-18461/>

Pro-coal, pro-nuclear, anti-renewables MP is Australia’s new resources minister

Michael Mazengarb, Renew Economy, 06/02/2020

Queensland MP Keith Pitt – an outspoken supporter of coal and nuclear and critic of wind and solar – has been elevated to the federal cabinet and replaces Matt Canavan as the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia.

Canavan had been the strongest pro-coal advocate in the Morrison cabinet for some time, but the track record of his replacement suggests the fossil fuel lobby won’t be too concerned about the loss of an ally who likes to describe himself as “Mr Coal.”

Pitt, who has served as the LNP member of the coastal Queensland electorate of Hinkler since 2013, has been an outspoken supporter of the coal industry, has pushed for the establishment of a nuclear industry in Australia and supported the Abbott government’s efforts to abolish the federal government’s renewable energy initiatives.

So strong is Pitt’s opposition to climate change action that he resigned as an assistant minister in 2018, following Scott Morrison’s elevation to the Prime Ministership, citing Australia’s commitment to the Paris Agreement as one of his core grievances.

<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/industry-urges-pitt-to-keep-his-foot-on-the-gas-20200206-p53yfw>

Industry urges Pitt to keep his foot on the gas

Phillip Coorey, AFR, 06/02/2020

Industry has urged new Resources Minister Keith Pitt to maintain momentum on policy measures to increase the supply of gas, after he was named to replace the outgoing Matt Canavan on Thursday.

However, Pitt's strong advocacy for nuclear power is set to stall with Scott Morrison saying the government was not about to change its policy of opposing nuclear power unless there was bipartisan support and an agreed solution to deal with waste.

The Nationals, including Senator Canavan, are demanding more coal-fired power stations be built.

Senator Canavan, who fell on his sword over his support for Joyce, has gone to the backbench and industry groups were anxious that the work he has done to increase the supply of domestic gas along the east coast, including the establishment of a domestic gas reservation, did not stall as a consequence of the upheaval.

"This is a challenging and vital portfolio, particularly with respect to the slow-motion crisis that is the Eastern Australian gas market," said Innes Willox, the chief executive of the Australian Industry Group.

Senator Canavan had promised that any new gas fields would be quarantined for domestic use.

The Australian chemistry industry backed Willox's call and the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association reminded Pitt he "inherits a strong legacy from Senator Canavan's stewardship of the resource portfolio".

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/pm-gives-strongest-backing-for-new-coal-fired-power-plant-since-election/news-story/81e516e4db397ec6a8d6cc4de54bd45c>

PM gives strongest backing for new coal-fired power plant since election

Michael Wray, Courier-Mail, 08/02/2020

The Morrison Government has given its strongest backing yet for a new coal-fired power plant as it seeks to boost baseload reliability and support jobs in north Queensland.

The government will spend up to \$4 million on a business case for a high efficiency, low emissions plant at Collinsville, about 250km south of Townsville.

The funding will come from a \$10 million election commitment to support new energy generation in central and North Queensland and represents the Government's strongest show of support for thermal coal after it was a divisive issue at the last federal election.

The announcement comes just days after the Collinsville project's biggest backer in the Government, Senator Matt Canavan, resigned as Resources Minister during a National Party leadership dispute.

New Resources and North Queensland Minister Keith Pitt said the investment would help ensure reliable and cheap electricity was available when the system needed it.

The Government is also set announce \$1.5 million to work with the Queensland Government and industry on electrifying Curtis Island LNG facilities, near Gladstone, freeing up more natural gas for domestic use.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/08/private-investors-wont-touch-new-coalition-backed-coal-plant-labor-says>

Private investors won't touch new Coalition-backed coal plant, Labor says

AAP/Guardian, 08/02/2020

The federal Labor opposition says private investors will not touch "with a barge pole" the Morrison government's plan to support a coal-fired power plant in Queensland.

The government says it will spend up to \$6m in grants for two new Queensland electricity generation projects, including a coal-fired power plant, as part of a bid to lower power prices.

Labor's climate change and energy spokesman, Mark Butler, said private investors would not touch a new coal-fired power station "with a barge pole".

"The government still has no energy policy – just ideological flights of fantasy," he said in Adelaide on Saturday. The private investment sector had made it very clear it had no appetite for building expensive coal-fired power stations, he said.

"If the industry itself won't touch this project, why should taxpayers foot the bill?"

[fossilfool.com.au](https://www.fossilfool.com.au)

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/federal/greens-want-coal-levy-to-fund-more-paid-firefighters-20200205-p53y0n.html>

Greens want coal levy to fund more paid firefighters

Judith Ireland, Bris Times, 05/02/2020

New Greens leader Adam Bandt wants to impose a new billion-dollar levy on big polluters to fund a doubling of paid firefighters in Australia.

Bandt will call for a levy on coal, gas and oil producers of \$1 per tonne of carbon dioxide in his first policy announcement as leader. The Melbourne MP said this will generate an extra \$1.5 billion a year and can be used to fund almost 16,000 new regional and metropolitan fire services jobs.

"Governments need to assess their crisis capacity and whether they're ready to cope with the next fire season – and the many others to follow," ACTU president Michele O'Neil said.

Labor, the Greens and the Senate crossbench also voted to set up a parliamentary inquiry into Australia's bushfire preparation and response on Wednesday.

Left-leaning think tank The Australia Institute proposed the coal, gas and oil levy last year as part of its call for a National Climate Disaster Fund.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-09/labor-critical-of-government-coal-record-while-sitting-on-fence/11947812>

Federal Labor critical of Coalition's coal study, while not ruling out blocking mines and power plants

Matthew Doran, ABC, 09/02/2020

The Federal Opposition has accused the Coalition of opening the door to subsidising new coal-fired power stations, as rogue Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce argued cutting carbon emissions was being prioritised ahead of affordable power.

Key points:

- Deputy Labor leader Richard Marles argues the Coalition is preparing to fund new coal projects in a bid to satisfy conservative backbencher

- Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce believes anyone speaking out against coal is being hypocritical, seeing as Australia exports it worldwide

- The Greens say Labor is sitting on the fence in refusing to rule out blocking new coal projects

Tensions were high in the Coalition

party room on Tuesday between conservative Nationals MPs, who wanted the Government to focus more on coal, and moderate Liberals who believed more needed to be done to tackle climate change.

The former Deputy PM (Barnaby Joyce) suggested people were trying to paint him as a pro-coal obsessive and said he did not have a “religious attachment” to coal.

“I have a religious attachment that the poor people can get affordable power, and that we can get dignity in people’s lives,” Joyce said.

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/queensland-government/matt-canavan-launches-defence-of-plans-for-new-coal-fired-power-station/news-story/8470aad82fa54410867d8966548f3681>

Matt Canavan launches defence of plans for new coal-fired power station

Renee Viellaris, Courier-Mail, 10/02/2020

An unleashed Matt Canavan has launched a strident defence of a new Collinsville coal-fired power station, describing renewables as the “dole bludgers” of the energy world, firing his first shot from the backbench in the new political battle facing the Morrison Government.

The former economist stunned colleagues last week when he quit Cabinet to support the leadership ambition of his former boss, Barnaby Joyce, who Senator Canavan believes can best fight for the bush.

Last year that Senator Canavan had a heated and expletive-laden exchange about supporting a new coal-fired power station in Collinsville, which has now received Federal Government funding for a feasibility study.

Canavan wrote, “Renewable energy can complement our energy needs but renewables do not run all the time making them unsuitable to support manufacturing jobs.

“Renewables are the dole bludgers of the energy system, they only turn up to work when they want to.”

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/opinion/canavan-time-to-fire-up-support-for-new-coal-fired-power-station/news-story/07fd128c83c38f779222ac3c022b1456>

Canavan: Time to fire up support for new coal-fired power station

Matt Canavan, Courier-Mail, 10/02/2020

The Liberal National Government is supporting the development of a coal fired power station at Collinsville in North Queensland. A recent study shows that a Collinsville power

station would help North and Central Queensland meet its power needs.

Renewable energy can complement our energy needs but renewables do not run all the time making them unsuitable to support manufacturing jobs. Renewables are the dole bludgers of the energy system, they only turn up to work when they want to.

The Labor party provides only lukewarm support the export of Queensland coal, but they definitely don’t support using Queensland coal in power stations to support Queensland jobs.

Under Labor, Australia’s big exports would be coal, gas, iron ore and our own jobs.

• *LNP Senator Canavan is the former Minister for Resources and Northern Australia*

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/steggall-appeals-to-sensible-centre-for-more-climate-action-20200210-p53zer.html>

Steggall appeals to ‘sensible centre’ for more climate action

Mike Foley, SMH, 11/02/2020

Independent MP Zali Steggall says her proposed “sensible centre” laws for more ambitious climate action will need Coalition MPs to cross the floor and public pressure to get through.

The Warringah representative, who ousted former prime minister Tony Abbott at the 2019 federal election campaigning on a climate change platform, on Monday released a private member’s bill seeking to enshrine in law the goals of the Paris climate agreement.

Steggall would need several Coalition MPs to cross the floor to secure the passage of the bill, to be introduced on March 23, through the lower house and is calling on the government to allow a conscience vote.

Under Steggall’s bill, policy would be guided by an independent, expert body called the Climate Change Commission (CCC), which would in effect reinstate the Climate Commission established by the Gillard Government in 2011 and abolished by the Abbott government in 2013. The CCC would advise the energy and emissions reduction minister, who would remain responsible for policy, on climate change risks.

The minister would set policies to meet an emissions budget consistent with net zero emissions by 2050 and the CCC would evaluate whether the government was on track to meet its goals.

Steggall was joined at the launch of her bill by independent MPs Helen Haines and Andrew Wilkie as well as Centre Alliance’s Rebekha Sharkie, who will second it for introduction to the lower house.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/11/canavan-delayed-releasing-documents-about-coal-lobby-interactions-before-resigning>

Canavan delayed releasing documents about coal lobby interactions before resigning

Christopher Knaus, Guardian, 11/02/2020

Former resources minister Matt Canavan repeatedly delayed releasing documents about his interactions with coal lobbyists until he resigned his post, rendering a freedom of information request void.

The case again highlights a significant flaw in Australia’s FOI regime, which makes it exceedingly difficult to access documents held by a minister if they shift portfolios or resign.

In November, the Australian Conservation Foundation sought access to all records of Canavan’s interactions with New Hope Coal and its lobbyists in the weeks leading up to the announcement of a crackdown on the use of secondary boycotts by environmental activists.

The minister identified six relevant documents but asked for more time to consult third parties. But the ACF says the deadline came and went without it receiving any response.

Last week, following Canavan’s resignation as minister, ACF campaigner Christian Slattery contacted the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources for an update. He was told the request was now void because Canavan no longer held the office and the documents had not been kept by his successor, Keith Pitt, meaning they were “no longer in the possession of a minister”.

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/federal/labor-mps-say-albanese-was-furious-with-them-over-pro-coal-dinner-20200213-p540nv.html>

Labor MPs say Albanese was furious with them over pro-coal dinner

Rob Harris, Brisbane Times, 13/02/2020

Labor leader Anthony Albanese was “furious” with a group of pro-coal Labor MPs who met to influence the party’s position on the industry, with several saying the leader or his allies threatened to discipline them after the group’s existence became public.

The emergence of a pro-coal faction within federal Labor ranks has again exposed divisions within the Opposition over climate policy, as a newly formed “Otis Group” pushes Albanese to publicly strengthen his support for the domestic coal industry.

Senior Labor sources said Albanese was angry at media reports a group of 20, including nine shadow ministers, were meeting regularly to raise concerns at the policy direction of the party.

But members of the group hosed down any direct threat to Albanese’s leadership, suggesting they were “trying to help him by pushing for a centrist policy”.

Another MP said the group had been formed by Fitzgibbon to help bring “frustrated conservatives into the tent”.

<https://www.dalbyherald.com.au/news/state-mps-locked-in-coal-fired-power-battle/3946013/>

State MPs locked in coal fired power battle

Leighton Smith, Dalby Herald, 17/02/2020

The prospect of the Federal Government using taxpayers’ money to underwrite the construction of a \$2 billion coal-fired power station at Collinsville has divided Queensland’s political parties.

Seeking to appease National Party MPs intent on building a coal-fired power station fuelled by locally dug coal, the Coalition Government pledged \$4 million into a feasibility study for the Collinsville project last week.

The LNP and One Nation parties have voiced their support for the investigation into 1GW High Energy Low Emissions power plant proposal at Collinsville, 250km south of Townsville.

The Katter Party have hit out at the Coalition over their decision to fund the feasibility study into a Collinsville Power Station, saying they had “bowed



Pro-coal MPs want the old Collinsville Power Station replaced with a \$2 billion, 1GW coal-burner. Photo: SBS

to the pressure of rogue, leadership-driven National” and demanded they “stop using North Queensland as a political football”.

While his party was supportive of the resource industry and coal-fired power, Katter believed a 1GW power station was too big and didn’t stack up financially.

“I am all for a single unit, 200MW power station at Collinsville,” Katter said. “If we build a major coal-fired power station, the size they are talking of, we are locked into \$84 a megawatt hour - Finkle is right,” Katter said.

“North Queensland’s businesses and industries would collapse.

“Alternatively, the people in southeast Queensland are getting their power at \$28 a megawatt hour.”

Natural Resources Minister Anthony Lynham has repeatedly maintained that Queensland was already well placed for energy generation and didn’t need another coal-fired power station – especially one funded by taxpayers.

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