CSG: Unrestrained corporate power “violates human rights”

The Australian National President for Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, Benedict Coyne, has come out in support of the Australian arm of the International People’s Tribunal Session on the Human Rights Impacts of Fracking.

The Tribunal session comes as Arrow Energy and Shell have signed a deal to roll out thousands more CSG wells across agricultural areas of QLD, and the Federal Government has announced a package to hand out millions in taxpayer funds to support onshore CSG and fracking across Australia.

Mr Coyne describes unconventional gas as “anti-democracy”, as “the logical progression of unrestrained corporate power, a systemic invocation of government against its people and it violates numerous universally accepted human rights as contained in the international bill of rights.”

Some of the rights violated by the dash for gas that are listed by Mr Coyne include:

- The right to highest standard of physical and mental health;
- The right to enjoy a safe a healthy environment;
- The right to property;
- Indigenous rights to culture and heritage; and
- Effective legal remedy.

He notes that three times since 2016, the issues and impacts of unconventional gas in Australia have reached the United Nations.

“The eyes of the world are on Australia and this issue making the tribunal a very important vehicle that will bear witness of the injustices being committed against our communities,” Mr Coyne said.

“There has been such wanton ignorance and secrecy in the roll out of this CSG industry that it is more important than ever that the community become educated about the impacts before more damage is done.

Wanton ignorance and stupidity... community must be educated before more damage is done

“It is up to all of us to stand up against the violations of human rights suffered by our fellow community members,” he said.

Chinchilla resident Shay Dougall, who worked to set up the Australian arm of the People’s Tribunal, said: “After experiencing the negative impacts of CSG, I’ve worked for many years to bring our local voices to the attention of Ministers, done air and water testing, hosted symposiums and written letters.

“I’ve met individuals and organisations that have also attempted to raise the consciousness of the government to the perils of the industry. We've felt the damage to our communities, to the environment and our human rights.

“People in the middle of this have their home, family and business hosting the dash for gas. We are expected to live with the consequences for generations to come.

“The International Permanent People’s Tribunal provides us the ultimate remedy to the barriers and challenges we face. It takes the issues to an authority higher than the government; the people,” she said.

February 2018 is the deadline that has been set for finalising testimony for the International Tribunal. See: peoplestribunalongas.org

$26m gas boost

Gas miners scored a fat Christmas gift from Minister for Resources and Northern Australia, Matt Canavan.

In a statement slipped out just before the holiday break, he said the Australian Government’s $26 million Gas Acceleration Program (GAP) will be open to applications from 15 January – 13 February.

The GAP is a component of a $90 million investment in gas security, said Mr Canavan.

The GAP will offer up to $6 million to gas projects that have substantiated prospects of bringing significant new gas volumes to market by mid-2020.

“This funding can be used to develop new technologies or techniques to boost well productivity, for new production or exploration near existing infrastructure.

“It can also be used to build new gas processing, storage and transport facilities, or for other activities that will bring forward new gas supply.

A handout to gasco’s to do more harm

Lock the Gate said the program is a taxpayer funded handout to gas companies that have been doing the wrong thing by Australian businesses.

“The Turnbull Government is now offering taxpayer funded handouts to big gas companies that export most of their gas,” Lock the Gate’s Naomi Hogan said.

“Too many Australian farms are being drilled, threatening land and water; all so the gas can be exported off overseas.

“We’d have enough gas for Australian businesses without having to frack more land, if we stopped exporting so much of it.
According to the Chinchilla News, Condamine River gas bubbles have fallen to the lowest levels yet recorded. In December 2017 the flow of gas from river seeps dropped by more than 90 per cent from the peak rate of almost 2000 litres per minute recorded in January 2016.

Origin’s interceptor wells are sucking up the fugitive methane. But there are potential negative effects. This is the possible sucking of water out of the river through the same pathway once the gas flow is controlled. See the full story at: https://www.chinchillanews.com.au/news/river-bubbles-burst/3302754/

Coal and gas tenements cover over 37% of Australia

National mapping reveals that 37.3% of Australia is covered by coal and gas licences and applications. That amounts to 285 million hectares – an area almost 13 times the size of Great Britain.

Lock the Gate says our best food-producing lands, finest natural areas and some of our most important water resources are all at risk from unsafe coal and gas mining. Many of our nationally significant water supplies are at risk, including:

- Sydney’s drinking water catchment
- Important groundwater resources for Perth and Alice Springs
- The vast inland water supplies of the Great Artesian Basin
- The desert rivers of the Lake Eyre Basin of south-west Qld
- The recharge zone for the international tourist icon of Mataranka Hot Springs
- The groundwater of the Limestone Coast of South Australia

Find out if your home or your family are covered by coal or gas licences

LTG has produced a map which can be explored by switching the layers on and off on the right, and using the zoom features. You can see coal, gas, or both.

People are encouraged to share the map across the country – http://www.lockthegate.org.au/australian_mining_map

Origin sucking up Condamine bubbles

Wangan and Jagalingou (W&J) representatives are seeking to prevent the extinguishment of their native title by the Queensland Government for Adani.

They have ensured that there will be no surrender of lands until the court hears their injunction application in January.

Justice Reeves of the Federal Court made an order yesterday against the Qld Government, preventing any surrender of native title until the W&J application is heard. He also set the W&J interlocutory application for a hearing on 30 January 2018.

This full hearing is set for trial in March in the matter of Delia Kemp-pi & Others v Adani Mining Pty Ltd & Others.

Wangan and Jagalingou (W&J) Traditional Owners Council Spokesperson, Adrian Burragubba said, “The interim injunction offers some respite. It ensures that extinguishment of our native title cannot be snuck through over the holiday period. Adani pressed hard and objected to the injunction. The Queensland Government sought to preserve its ability to advance swiftly on the Adani project, refusing to give an undertaking not to proceed.

“Extinguishment of native title is a very serious matter... we seek to void Adani’s supposed land use deal”

“We have long argued Adani’s ‘Indigenous land use agreement’ (ILUA) is a sham, and that it should not have been registered. With the support of the W&J claim group who voted against the agreement for the fourth time on December 2, we are determined to prevent our land being taken without our consent and to protect our country and sacred places from destruction.

“It is necessary for us to seek to restrain them. Any ILUA with Traditional Owners should be beyond reproach and demonstrate without doubt our free prior informed consent. Especially if extinguishment of native title results from it.”

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Find out if your home or your family are covered by coal or gas licences
The news this week

Fallout from Adani’s split with lead contractor Downer continued over Christmas week. While Adani claimed it had called off the deal, The Oz and AFR reported it was Downer who spat the dummy. The company lost faith that work on the Carmichael mine would commence any time soon.

Adani’s project director for the mine, Peter Thomas, has quit the job and signed on as CEO of WA port developer, BBI Group.

Bloomberg reported that Gautam Adani’s wealth increased by $5.6 billion last year, riding on stock market gains. He was the second-best performing of India’s billionaires in 2017.

John Quiggin’s New Matilda article is recommended reading, as he explains why Adani persists with the project despite the numbers not stacking up.

Adani’s favoured media outlet, The Courier Mail, lashed the Palaszczuk government for ‘brazen hypocrisy’ over the Adani Naif loan veto. “All the hallmarks of student unionism politicking,” the editor spouted, alongside a sympathetic interview with Adani Australia’s CEO, Jeyakumar Janakaraj.

Clive Palmer’s proposed new coal mine north of Rockhampton has been labelled a public health ‘shocker’ and a toxic gas threat to drivers on the Bruce Highway during blasting operations, says the ABC. It is thought Mr Palmer is seeking approval for the mine in order to sell it.

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The Sydney Morning Herald reported the unlamented departure of NSW EPA chief, James Buffier. Pollution from Hunter Valley mines, power stations, vehicle emissions and coal train dust all proliferated under his watch.

One of Australia’s biggest carbon polluters, Chevron, has hit technical problems with underground injection of CO2. Over five million tonnes of the gas will instead be released to the atmosphere from its Gorgon plant over two years, says The West Australian.

Lastly, The Australian says the Minerals Council of Australia chief blames green activist ‘attacks’ for a steep drop in mining engineering student enrolments.
Rainfall on the Darling Downs can be a mixed blessing when you live in close proximity to dozens of CSG wells and processing plants. After heavy rain made him itchy like sunburn and caused sore eyes and a sore throat, a resident found dead frogs in the strainers of all three household water tanks. Residents consider their water unfit for drinking and bathing.

Gas companies and the government have been unhelpful with testing for contaminants. Human sickness and animal deaths like this were not evident before CSG drilling took over the landscape.

**Did a ‘greenie’ send Barnaby’s bullet?**

When Barnaby Joyce’s by-election campaign was punctuated by a bullet and death threat in the mail, he was quick to blame ‘greenies’ for the unwelcome package.

He said “this is the sort of garbage we have to put up with”.

“People always think these wonderful green lobbyists, they’re all so peaceful. When they deliver a bullet, they obviously have a firearm and they obviously own rounds of ammunition.”

“This is not the sort of politics we want in Australia.”

But were any green lobbyists involved?

Armidale man Neville Newman, 74, was charged on December 28 after police allegedly found bullets at his home which match those which were sent to the National party leader at his Peel St office in November.

The man was charged with using a carriage service to menace/harass/offend and stalking.

Mr Newman has also been charged with making a threatening phone call to Joyce’s parents, Marie and James, on Saturday 23 December.

The bullet was sent with a note about the $1 billion Adani loan and other, undisclosed, issues.

Mr Newman was bailed and is due to appear at the Armidale Local Court on Monday February 12.

Mr Joyce has many potential enemies. He recently rolled a well-regarded National Party minister out of Cabinet.

His family strife is well-known in social media circles, despite the MSM skipping over some dramatic incidents.

Green activists in the Armidale area say they have never heard of the alleged offender.
The Queensland Labor cabinet will consider extending its veto of a $1 billion federal loan for the Adani mine to other projects in the burgeoning Galilee Basin coal province.

State Treasurer Jackie Trad yesterday confirmed that cabinet would soon decide whether it would block a similar loan application from coal and freight hauler Aurizon to fund a $1.5 billion multi-user rail link to also service planned mines in the central Queensland basin.

The decision comes less than two months after protests marred Downer’s annual meeting of shareholders in Sydney.

US engineering company AECOM is understood to still be working with Adani.

THE ADANI SAGA


Adani severs ties with Downer

Peter Ker, Australian Financial Review, 10/12/2017

Downer EDI was hired by Adani in December 2014 to conduct drilling, blasting and coal haulage at the Carmichael project, under a deal reportedly of almost $2 billion.

But under the terms of the deal, Downer had the right to scrap the agreement if the Carmichael project had not officially gone ahead by November 30, and with financing for the project still uncertain, Downer asked Adani to consider cancelling the agreement in recent weeks.

THE MORNING BULLETIN


Another Downer for Adani after breakup with major contractor

Leighton Smith, The Morning Bulletin, 18/12/2017

THE Queensland Government’s decision to veto Adani’s NAIF loan has caused them to scrap a $2 billion contract with engineering group Downer EDI for the controversial Carmichael coal mine.

It’s not all doom and gloom according to Newscorp analyst John McCarthy who said Adani had shown its ability to raise funds by recently refinancing hundreds of millions of dollars in debt for the Abbott Point coal port - showing investor faith in the port’s viability.

“It can sell a stake in its project and there have been rumours of international investment funds willing to take up that option,” Mr McCarthy said.

“It can sell its Abbott Point coal port, which could raise more than the $2 billion it paid for it.”

Mr McCarthy said Adani also had the option of cutting about $2 billion from its cost base and letting Aurizon build its alternative rail line from the Galilee Basin mine site to the Abbot Point port.

THE MORNINGSAGE


Another Downer for Adani after breakup with major contractor

A consequence of QLD Government’s decision to veto a NAIF loan.

THEMORNINGBULLETIN.COM.AU

Downer, Adani shelf $2bn contracts

Paul Garvey, The Australian, 19/12/2017

More than $2 billion of potential contracts between Adani and construction heavyweight Downer EDI over the controversial Carmichael coal project have been abandoned amid the fallout from the Queensland government’s funding veto.

It’s understood the original letters of intent between Adani and Downer expired at the end of November, with the contractor then approaching Adani to discuss a termination of the agreement. Investors in Downer had placed little to no weight on the prospect of the Adani work materialising any time soon, with shares in the company easing by 0.6 per cent to $6.87.

After Downer’s withdrawal, anti-Adani activists set their sights on ALP

Andrew Tate, The New Daily, 18/12/2017

With mining services company Downer pulling out of the Adani coal mine development, activists now say they’ll turn their pressure tactics on the ALP at a state and federal level.

“The Labor party in Queensland, who are now in a majority, have got the power to stop mining in the Galilee Basin.


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Adani severs ties with Downer

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The decision comes less than two months after protests marred Downer’s annual meeting of shareholders in Sydney.

US engineering company AECOM is understood to still be working with Adani.


Adani decides to build coal mine itself to keep costs low

Tony Raggatt, Townsville Bulletin, 19/12/2017

A spokesman for Downer conceded it was disappointed to have lost work potentially worth more than $2 billion, adding that any time wasted on the project by a small number of staff was “part of business”.

Townsville Enterprise director Michael McMillan said Adani were forging ahead and the organisation would continue to support them.


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Alpha coal mine venture in Galilee Basin could be preparing for fire sale after long delay, analysts say

Josh Robertson, ABC, 21/12/2017

GVK Hancock lobbyist Josh Euler gave “project updates” to Opposition MP now leader Deb Frecklington, former Opposition environment spokesman Christian Rowan and crossbencher Robbie Katter at three separate fundraisers last month.

This has raised eyebrows among analysts and activists after GVK’s proposed Alpha and Kevin’s Corner mines in the Galilee Basin appeared to be going nowhere because of financial problems.

Institute for Energy Economics and Analysis spokesman Tim Buckley said the GVK venture appeared “absolutely dead” but the company could be preparing for a fire sale.

Electoral Commission of Queensland records show that Mr Euler’s firm Resolution PR declared donations of $2,900 to the LNP and $3,000 to Katter’s Australian Party two days before the election.

GVK Hancock slashed its staff and supplier payments from $6 million to $870,000 this year.

Ms Rinehart’s own company has declared it unlikely it will ever see the $630 million it is still owed over the years.

Aurizon last year wrote off a $30 million expenditure to avoid writing off the large amounts already invested, and to maintain an option in the hope that “something will turn up.”

A second hypothesis is that the complexity of the Adani corporate structure is such that Adani could construct the proposed rail line almost entirely with public funds provided on concessional terms, then hope that other coal mines in the Basin would render it profitable.

A third possibility is that by making continuous new demands on governments for concessions of various kinds, Adani will eventually be able to blame government policy for the project’s failure, and on this basis extract compensation.

Quiggin’s article is recommended reading, click the link above the headline to see it for yourself.

Michael West, 26/12/2017

Why build a new thermal coal mine, and subsidise it with taxpayers’ money, when renewable energy is half the price?

Tim Buckley, director of Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), says India demonstrates “continued evidence of rampant, accelerating, massive renewable energy deflation. Faster than anyone thought possible”.

It used to sound hollow, but now the coal lobby catch-cry, “coal is good for the poor people of India” now sounds plainly comical.

A revolution in new energy is afoot globally. Australian people are on board with both the science and the economics. But their government is not. It remains forlornly beholden to the minerals lobby, corporate donations and the ‘revolving doors’ which ensure the flow of human influence between industry and government.
Adani: Palaszczuk Government not ruling out loan to rival Aurizon for Galilee Basin rail line

Anthony Galloway, The Courier-Mail, 28/12/2017

A rival rail line into the coal-rich Galilee Basin is gaining traction with the Palaszczuk Government not ruling out vetoing the move to seek a federal government loan.

Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce told The Courier-Mail the proposal by rival giant Aurizon should be seriously considered, now that Indian miner Adani has been blocked from receiving concessional loan from the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF).

A spokesman for Aurizon said it submitted an application to NAIF in March this year and discussions about any loan were commercial-in-confidence. $  


Adani coal megamine: Palaszczuk Government dismisses complaints about NAIF veto impact

John McCarthy, The Courier-Mail, 30/12/2017

“Adani representatives themselves have claimed as far back as 2015 that the commercial viability of their project was not dependent on public funding and in fact started developing their project six years before the NAIF was established,” a Palaszczuk Government spokesman said.

“We are confident that even though the company has not met its own self-imposed financial close deadline, this will not deter the project as has been the case previously.”

Adani Australia chief executive Jeyakumar Janakaraj said the company had found out about the briefing when Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced it at a media conference one week into the state election campaign.

“No one is prepared for bad news. Obviously it shook us,” he said. $  


State Government yet to clarify position on Galilee rail link

Tony Raggatt, Townsville Bulletin, 30/12/2017

Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce says Aurizon’s proposal should be seriously considered now Adani has been blocked by the State Government from receiving a $1 billion concessional loan from the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility for a rail line for its Carmichael coal mine.

Asked to clarify the Government’s position, Treasurer Jackie Trad instead attacked the Federal Government.

“The Federal Government’s Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility has not yet seen a single dollar go to a Queensland project,” she said in a statement. $ 


Demand for coal suffers a record fall over past two years

Paul Garvey, The Australian, 19/12/2017

Worldwide coal demand has suffered its biggest-ever fall over the past two years as the global revolution under way in energy eats into the market for Australia’s second-biggest export.

A detailed annual analysis released last night by the International Energy Agency found that coal demand fell by 1.9 per cent to 5.3 billion tonnes last year, taking the total drop in demand since 2014 to 4.2 per cent.

That fall in demand is the largest in absolute terms ever recorded over a two-year period, and the equal-largest in percentage terms since 1990-92.

The global trend away from coal highlighted by the IEA contrasts with the federal government’s strong advocacy for the commodity. The government earlier this year flagged its preparedness to back the construction of new coal power stations as a means of improving electricity supplies on the east coast, with Malcolm Turnbull declaring the government was open to using “clean coal” technology to replace existing generators. $


Intermittent: another big coal unit trips, that’s four in a week

Renew Economy, 20/12/2017

The failure of the Eraring unit at 6pm on Monday follows unexpected trips at of a 420MW unit at Milmerran in Queensland on Tuesday, a 700MW unit at Mt Piper in NSW on Wednesday, and a 560MW unit at Loy Yang A (unit 3) in Victoria on Thursday.

The Mt Piper unit remains out of service, due to tube leaks, along with a 420MW unit at Liddell (out for six months due to turbine blade issues), and lingering problems at another 560MW unit (Unit 1) at Loy Yang A, which has been out for more than a month since tripping in early November.

It means that, aside from the unexpected trips, the equivalent of another Hazelwood power plant (more in fact) is out of service and unavailable as the summer heat intensifies.

The intermittent and unreliable nature of the coal fired power stations will be of particular concern to the Australian Energy Market Operator, charged with keeping the lights on and hoping it has enough reserve capacity to deal with failing coal and gas units.

This week, a task-force commissioned by the NSW government after that February near miss warned of a potential “system black” in NSW and noted the lack of preparedness for such an event. That conclusion is ironic because the NSW grid, sourcing some 88 per cent of its supply from coal fired generation in 2016/17 has the highest reliance on coal of any grid in the world.


Muswellbrook Shire Council is taking on BHP and the Department of Planning over Mount Arthur coal mine

Joanne McCarthy, Newcastle Herald, 01/01/2018

Muswellbrook Shire Council has had an early win in a legal case against BHP and the NSW Department of Planning that is shaping up as a test of the independence of the NSW Planning Assessment Commission and the enforceability of its consent conditions.

The council alleges BHP is not complying with PAC consent conditions from 2014 requiring rehabilitation of the giant Mount Arthur open cut coal mine using processes that would leave the final site more closely imitating the natural landscape.

The council argues the Department of Planning’s acceptance of a rehabilitation strategy that only includes “natural micro-relief” processes in newly-mined areas raises questions about the independence of the PAC and whether its conditions will be enforced by the NSW Government.

The council responded that it was “manifestly unreasonable” for the Department of Planning to sign off on the rehabilitation strategy because “the mine site as a whole will not be left safe, stable and non-polluting and will not have final landforms incorporating natural micro-relief and natural drainage lines to integrate with the surrounding landforms”.

Renewed inquiries into coal contamination on beaches

**Luke Mortimer, The Daily Mercury, 30/12/2017**

THE Department of Environment could end up launching a new investigation into coal contamination on Mackay region beaches.

Environmental activist Lance Payne has spent about a year walking Mackay’s beaches, collecting coal chunks and fine black material washed up along the shore.

He’s been in the department’s ear, relentlessly pushing for action on what he describes as a significant environmental issue.

Meanwhile, Mr Payne said he continues to find substantial amounts of coal on beaches in the region.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science released research in 2016 indicating coal dust in seawater can kill corals and slow down the growth rate of seagrasses and fish.

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**Wambo underground extension gets PAC green light**

**Lou Caruana, The Mining Monthly, 04/01/2018**

Peabody Energy has received approval from the New South Wales Planning Assessment Commission for a modification to extend its Wambo Coal Mine’s underground operations, which will involve extracting an extra 18 million tonnes of coal from nine additional underground longwalls.

The approval means the life of the Wambo Coal Underground Mine, located near Warkworth, is extended by seven years until 2039.

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**Environmental watchdog lost its bite under Buffier**

**James Whelan, Sydney Morning Herald, 05/01/2018**

During the summer break, Barry Buffier quietly announced his resignation as chief executive and chair of the NSW Environment Protection Authority. Buffier – and the EPA under his leadership – came to be known as a toothless environmental tiger, captured by polluters and the corporations that harm the state’s environment.

Buffier’s management of the state’s air environment has been the source of particular criticism. Under his watch, particle pollution from the state’s 30-odd open-cut coal mines trebled. Coarse particle pollution (PM10) from explosions, digging, hauling, dumping and wheel dust causes up to 80 air pollution alerts a month in the Hunter Valley. Despite an excellent air pollution monitoring network that provides community members with immediate access to data and pollution alerts, Buffier’s EPA team have failed to regulate this powerful polluter.

So, too, the authority has failed to control emissions of toxic gases and fine particle pollution (PM2.5) from power stations and motor vehicles, the state’s main sources of these pollutants.

On his watch, a controversial study of air pollution from uncovered coal trains in Newcastle, the world’s largest coal export port, had its findings revised to dismiss the conclusion that uncovered coal wagons cause elevated levels of particle pollution in densely populated suburbs and that they should be covered. To this day, Newcastle’s coal trains remain uncovered.

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**Carbon hiccup for Chevron with 5 million-tonne greenhouse gas problem at Gorgon LNG plant**

**Peter Milne, The West Australian, 19/12/2017**

Technical problems with Chevron’s landmark effort to store carbon dioxide from the Gorgon LNG project may see more than five million tonnes of greenhouse gas released into the atmosphere over two years.

The $2.5 billion program to inject CO₂ from the offshore Gorgon gas field under the Pilbara’s Barrow Island is a major plank of the $US55 billion project and the recipient of $60 million in Federal Government funding.

A Chevron report to the State Government released yesterday said start-up checks this year found leaking valves, valves that could corrode and excess water in the pipeline from the LNG plant to the injection wells that could cause the pipeline to corrode.

The delay will make it difficult for Chevron to meet a condition imposed by the Environmental Protection Act in 2009 that at least 80 per cent of the CO₂ extracted from the gas reservoirs over any five-year period is injected underground.

Conservation Council WA director Piers Verstegen said Gorgon was one of the biggest sources of carbon pollution in Australia. If the CO₂ injection could not be made to work then the emissions must be offset in some other way, he said. $

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**Santos increases its domestic gas supply**

**Cole Latimer, Sydney Morning Herald, 20/12/2017**

Santos has signed a deal with Origin to supply 15 petajoules of gas to the domestic market.

The gas will be supplied from Santos’ Gladstone LNG project (GLNG), in Queensland.

This latest supply accounts for around two per cent of Australia’s total 2018 domestic gas demand, and a significant proportion of the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission’s forecast supply shortfall.

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**‘Acceleration’ incentive for miners**

**Daniel Pedersen, The Land, 21/12/2017**

The government’s $26 million “Gas Acceleration Program” will open to applications early in the new year, to further strengthen the east coast gas market.

Guidelines for the GAP were released on Wednesday, ahead of grant applications opening in January.

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**Coal seam gas chemical health risks dismissed by industry**

**Jamieson Murphy, Northern Daily Leader, 29/12/2017**

COAL seam gas opponents say recently released assessments of the chemicals used in the mining process reiterate the health dangers of the industry. However, the concerns have been dismissed by the industry, which says the examples assume no safety regulations are in place.

Reports by the CSIRO and NICNAS modelled the exposure pathways of chemicals through water contamination and examined the risk of spills, accidents and leaks.
RARE EARTHS

[Link to article] EPA approves $900m rare earths mine in Central Australia despite radioactive risk

Ben Millington, ABC, 05/12/2018

A proposed $900 million rare earths mine in Central Australia has been recommended for approval by the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (EPA), after an assessment process lasting more than two years.

Arafura Resources’ Nolans Project at Aileron, 135 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs, would mine rare earth materials such as neodymium and praseodymium, used to manufacture strong magnets for wind turbines and electric vehicles.

The primary risks include the permanent storage of naturally occurring radioactive material onsite and the use of significant groundwater resources over the 35 to 55-year lifespan of the project.

It is estimated the project will use 2.7 gigalitres of groundwater a year, and the EPA has recommended aquifer levels and water usage be monitored in real-time with data made available to the public.

Arafura Resources Sustainability manager Brian Fowler said the low level of radioactive material produced in the processing of rare earth material would be stored onsite in purpose-built dams.

A financial investment decision will be made in the late part of this year.

MINING POLITICS

[Link to article] BHP set to leave World Coal Association, threatens Minerals Council withdrawal

Michael Janda, ABC, 19/12/2017

Australian mining giant BHP is set to pull out of the World Coal Association and is threatening to leave the Minerals Council of Australia over differences on climate change policy.

The company has published a 22-page report outlining key climate and energy policy differences between itself and several of the lobby groups it is a member of.

The company said it is also considering its future as part of the US Chamber of Commerce.

BHP to stay a member of the Minerals Council - at least for now

Darren Gray, Sydney Morning Herald, 19/12/2017

The world’s biggest miner, BHP, will remain a member of the Minerals Council of Australia - at least for now - but has signalled it has reached a “preliminary view” that it intends to leave the World Coal Association, after a review of its membership of industry associations.

BHP also revealed publicly for the first time how much it contributes to the minerals council, with the “Big Australian” paying a subscription fee of $1.86 million to the group in the 2016 calendar year.

[Link to article] Disappointed’ coal lobby group delivers a rebuke to BHP

Darren Gray, Sydney Morning Herald, 20/12/2017

The World Coal Association has hit back at mining giant BHP saying the miner inaccurately depicted the views of the association on climate and energy policy in a BHP report released this week.

In a written statement released on Tuesday night the chairman of the WCA, MickBUFF, hit back at BHP.

“A visit to the WCA website will find the first item listed as ‘A pathway to zero emissions from coal, supporting deployment of all low emission technologies.’ We hope to be able to continue working with BHP on this basis in the future,” he said.

[Link to article] ‘Disappointed’ coal lobby group delivers a rebuke to BHP


BHP’s extraordinary call on power policy

Matt Chambers, The Australian, 21/12/2017

BHP Billiton is the world’s biggest miner: But it might just be worst candidate among Minerals Council of Australia members to steer the debate on east coast energy policy on behalf of the minerals industry.

This is because BHP is unique among major MCA members in being a net beneficiary of higher east coast energy prices and lower domestic coal demand, thanks to its 50 per cent share in the big gas fields of Bass Strait.

Disappointed’ coal lobby group delivers a rebuke to BHP

Peter Lewis, The Guardian, 22/12/2017

The moment that summed up the political year 2017 for me came in the first sitting week when treasurer Scott Morrison marched into parliament brandishing a lump of coal.

“This is coal – don’t be afraid, don’t be scared”, the treasurer cried out manically, before passing it along his front bench where Barnaby Joyce proceeded to fondle it like Gollum his precious ring.

The coal stunt was a none-too-subtle attempt to shift the focus of energy policy away from the imperative of transitioning to a renewable future by opening a new wave of investment in fossil fuels.

The premeditated stunt locked the Coalition in behind a coal lobby that had been running a coordinated campaign to besmirch renewables since an extreme weather event had led to blackouts in South Australia in late 2016.


Barnaby Joyce: Armidale man charged over bullet death threat sent to Deputy PM’s office

ABC, 28/12/2017

Police arrested a 74-year-old man at Armidale Police Station this morning, after receiving a threatening phone call on December 23.

Police arrested a 74-year-old man at Armidale Police Station this morning, after receiving a threatening phone call on December 23.
74-year-old charged over sending a bullet to Barnaby Joyce’s office

Eryk Bagshaw, Sydney Morning Herald, 28/12/2017

Armidale man Neville Newman will face court on charges of stalking and using a carriage service to cause offence to the Deputy Prime Minister. It came a month after Mr Newman allegedly sent a bullet to Mr Joyce’s Tamworth electorate office along with concerns about Queensland’s Adani coal mine.

Mr Newman is also alleged to have made a threatening phone call to a home on the night before Christmas Eve.

74-year-old charged with allegedly sending bullets to Deputy PM

Sally Rawsthorne, The Daily Telegraph, 28/12/2017

Armidale man Neville Newman has been charged after police allegedly found bullets at his home which match those which were sent to the National party leader at his Peel St office in November.

Newman has also been charged with making a threatening phone call to Joyce’s parents, Marie and James, on Saturday 23 December. $ http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/new/74-year-old-charged-with-allegedly-sending-bullets-to-deputy-pm/news-story/839f156a07f4b0e05d4010d5d0e64933

Senior citizen allegedly sent Barnaby Joyce by-election bullet

Joe Kelly, The Australian, 28/12/2017


A great year for clean energy in Australia ends, while bad news for coal continues

Simon Holmes à Court, The Guardian, 31/12/2017

In 20 years we’ll look back on 2017 as a turning point for the climate challenge.

Renewable energy broke new records—China installed seven solar panels a second and India’s energy minister now expects to install 200GW of renewables by 2022.

Throughout the year the Minerals Council of Australia drove hard their campaign for new ‘high efficiency, low emissions’ (HELE) coal that was swallowed hook, line and sinker by many in parliament and the media.

On any analysis, HELE is not new, not highly efficient, not low emissions and not cheap—HELE is nothing more than a cynical rebranding exercise.

The federal government threw another lifeline to coal by reintroducing carbon capture and storage (CCS) into the debate. Never mind that the only two demonstration plants globally are small, expensive and loss-making, or that the Australian National Audit Office found that the $1bn spent in Australia over a decade on CCS has yielded approximately nothing.

More than 50 large-scale renewable energy projects are either under construction or have been completed in Australia in 2017 totalling 4,670MW, as much as was built over the first 15 years of the renewable energy target. Australian households installed more rooftop solar than any year since 2012 when subsidies were three times as generous — no other country has a higher take-up of residential solar.

Climate group 350.org may lose charity status over protest call

Joe Kelly, The Australian, 06/01/2018

Climate group 350.org is being investigated by the federal government’s charities regulator to determine whether it promoted unlawful activities, with The Australian obtaining video of its Australian chief executive Blair Palese appearing to encourage anti-coal protesters to break the law.

Resources Minister Matt Canavan seized on the footage of Ms Palese, telling The Australian that her conduct gave “all charities a bad name.”

According to its financial statement for the year ended June 30 2017 lodged with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), 350.org recorded a total income of $1.2 million nearly entirely sourced through donations including $641,598 from “foundations” and $110,260 in the form of “international” donations.

The ACNC, now headed by former Keating government minister Gary Johns, told The Australian it was “investigating (350.org’s) activities and operations” but was constrained from saying anything publicly due to the “secrecy provisions in the ACNC Act.” $ http://www.smh.com.au/business/mining-and-resources/the-ground-is-shifting-under-bhp-20180104-h0d055.html

Greenies turn off mining’s Gen Next in alarming drop in enrolments

Syd Mahler, The Australian, 06/01/2018

Attacks by green activists on the resources industry are turning millenials off mining jobs, sparking warnings the industry will face some of the toughest recruitment conditions in 20 years unless it confronts the problem.

The Minerals Council of Australia’s interim chief executive David Byers told The Weekend Australian: “It’s unfortunate that sustained attacks from misinformation activists have dissuaded some young people from looking at a career in mining.”

Expected enrolments in mining engineering have almost halved in the past 12 months and are projected to halve again by the end of the decade. MCA figures suggest mining engineering enrolments have dropped from 171 last year to 98 this year and are on track to fall to 69 next year and 47 in 2020. $