



Castlecrag Conservation Society Inc

PO Box 4230 Castlecrag 2068, <http://castlecragconservationsociety.org/>

Newsletter No 100

August 2015

CONSERVATION UP-DATE

Next Meeting

Wednesday 2nd September 2015

8pm

Glenaeon School Hall, Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag

CHASING ICE

a film by Jeff Orlowski

If you believe in Climate Change, or even if you have doubts, this is a film you must see.

In the spring of 2005, acclaimed environmental photographer James Balog headed to the Arctic on a tricky assignment for National Geographic to capture images to help tell the story of the Earth's changing climate.

CHASING ICE is the story of one man's mission to change the tide of history by gathering undeniable evidence of our changing planet. Within months of that first trip to Iceland, the photographer conceived the boldest expedition of his life, The Extreme Ice Survey. With a band of young adventurers in tow, Balog set up revolutionary time-lapse cameras across the brutal Arctic to capture a multi-year record of the world's changing glaciers.

As the debate polarises America and the intensity of natural disasters ramps up globally, Balog finds himself at the end of his tether. Battling untested technology in subzero conditions, he comes face to face with his own mortality. His hauntingly beautiful videos compress years into seconds and capture ancient mountains of ice in motion as they disappear at a breathtaking rate. CHASING ICE depicts a photographer trying to deliver evidence and hope to our carbon-powered planet.

Everyone is welcome. Please join us for supper after the film.

How much further can he go? Tony "coal is good for humanity" Abbott has ordered the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) not to invest in wind turbines and solar powered roof tops. Apart from all his other disastrous policies, his environmental policies especially climate change, raise the question: should Abbott and his government remain in power? Definitely not.

INSIDE: Quotes & Sayings, CCS Committee Decisions Page 2; **Abbott's Wind Turbine Syndrome** Page 3; No need to investigate windfarms or alien abduction Page 5; Land Degradation Page 4; **The New Cold War**, Pope blasts global warming deniers, **Coal seam gas licences cancelled, Australia lagging on climate change response**, Shenhua Watermark Coal Mine - farmers oppose, Page 6; **Cancer-Causing Chemicals Found In Drinking Water**, Green groups feel squeeze over tax-deductible donations probe Page 7; **Adani halts engineering work on controversial Carmichael mine**, New **analysis shows sea level rising faster**, Page 8; Australian Environment Foundation (AEF), Page 9; Bushland, Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, People Power Wins, Page 10; **Great Barrier Reef water quality to be monitored** in real time in pollution crackdown, **Australia trashes renewable energy target** Page 11; **UN World Heritage Committee calls for major changes to Tasmanian Government's forests plan**, **Coalition bans government's clean energy bank from financing wind power** Page 12.

Quotes & Sayings

Economic Basket Case!

Adani mega-coal mine proposal an 'economic basket case'
Qld Treasury *ReNew Economy* July 1 2015

If Climate Warming is not stopped

There are no jobs on a dead planet."

Clare Raffan, Campsie *Letters SMH* June 24 2015

Not Again!

Julie Bishop plays down significance of China's 60% carbon reduction pledge.

The Guardian July 1 2015

Greens propose Flat Earth Commissioner after Libs call for climate science inquiry

RenewEconomy June 25, 2015



The Australian Greens have responded to reports of a Liberal push for an Inquiry into the scientific evidence behind man-made climate change by suggesting the government also establishes a Flat Earth Commissioner, to inquire "into the roundness or otherwise of the Earth."

Climate change — the bottom line

But the bottom line is what matters here: our economic system and our planetary system are now at war. More accurately our economy is at war with many forms of life on earth, including human life. What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity's use of resources; what our economy model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion; Only one of these sets of rules can be changed

and it's not the law of nature. Naomi Klein in her book *This changed everything. Capitalism vs the Climate* Penguin Books 2014

CCS Committee Decisions

The Committee met on 24th July. Matters considered were:

- **NCC membership** renewed
- **Website** : investigate moving it to a new platform that would allow easier updating by committee members
- **Haven Amphitheatre** The meeting of the Haven Advisory Committee on 22nd July was reported on and discussed. CCS understood Craig Burton was only to meet one representative from each of the community groups. Mark Crew is waiting to be advised of his next meeting with Craig Burton.

10/50 Legislation: Gay Spies met with Gladys Berejiklian on 6th May. She (GB) has forwarded a letter from David Elliott, Minister for Emergency Services, stating that the "review is expected to be completed in the near future".

IPART: Opportunity for individuals to make a submission on their local council's response to Fit for the Future (re amalgamation). Closing date is 31st July.

Protect Sydney Water. CCS should support the campaign against Wollongong Coal's controversial bid to extend underground operations.

Better Planning Network Meeting on Monday 27th July of invited members. Organised by those who have left BPN's Leadership Group. A "members planning session" has been organised by the remaining members of BPN's Leadership Group for Saturday, 8 August from 11am to 3pm at Redfern Town Hall. (This date has since been changed.)

Willoughby Council trees: Discussion about Willoughby Council's program for handling their tree assets. Do they have a Street Tree Master Plan? 20/20 Vision? Risk management seems to be to cut down any tree which is seen as having a possible problem and replace it with a "shrub". Castlecrag groups to meet to discuss an approach to Council?

Castlecrag Northern Escarpment Reserve Action Plan (RAP) - Update

The Bushland Manager reviewed the site inspection conducted by the Natural Heritage & Bushland Advisory Committee (NHBAC) on 7 May 2015. This included identifying key features and habitats within the reserve and displaying the burn history and proposed prescribed burns.

The NHBAC identified that the Castlecrag Northern Escarpment is important for its visual amenity to Sugarloaf Bay, the relatively good state of native vegetation, and that significant improvements have been made to restore degraded bushland. The NHBAC is requesting that the RAP includes an action to target weed removal at reserve entrances to improve visual appeal.

CCS Executive & Committee 2015

President	Mark Crew
Voce President	Chris Hopwood
Secretary	Vacant
Treasurer	Diana Jones
Committee	Richard Blacklock, Terese Hayward, Gay Spies, Harold Spies

Weeds

A weed is any plant that is out of place. This not only includes foreign plants but also Australian plants that have been introduced to areas outside their natural range.

There are many plants that are considered weeds in Willoughby, some of which are listed as a **Noxious Weed**. The rest are environmental weeds. All weeds threaten the area's bushland reserves.

Weeds can be a symptom of underlying problems such as increased runoff or changed drainage conditions, or they may be escapees from gardens. When they grow in the bush they replace the local native plants and alter the habitat for wildlife.

Typical weeds produce large amounts of seeds so they spread quickly. Seeds can travel into natural environments by wind, water, humans, vehicles, machinery, birds, and other animals. Some also spread quickly from new shoots. Weeds especially thrive where fertilisers and other urban wastes are washed into bushland as this introduces extra nutrients into the soil.

Council sometimes uses pesticides to get rid of weeds in Willoughby, in accordance with the **Pesticide Use Notification Plan**.

Reduce the spread of weeds

To reduce the spread of weeds into the bush:

Remove identified weeds from your garden and replace them with non-invasive species.

Never dump garden or other waste in bushland areas.

Compost your garden clippings, or place them in Council's green-waste bins for collection.



Ochna flowers

Perversity in the Pasture

And despite the risk, new varieties of plants that are known to be invasive are still widely developed and sold in Australia, with little regulation from government.

Grasses out of control

African Love Grass was used to "improve pasture" in Australia for almost 100 years, but now it is a **declared weed** in four Australian states and the ACT. African Love Grass has been of **little value** in pastures, poses a **substantial fire risk** and **threatens a range of native species**.

Similarly, **Gamba grass** was widely promoted by the cattle industry and government in northern Australia, but is now listed as a **Weed of National Significance**. Gamba grass **increases fire intensity** five-fold, which transforms native woodlands into exotic grassland and increases the cost of fire management by an order of magnitude. Introducing these pasture species was a big mistake that Australians will continue to pay for indefinitely. We face increased fire risks, increased management and weed control costs, as well as ongoing loss of our natural heritage.

Australasian Science July-August 2015

Wildlife

The transition of Willoughby from bushland to a city has taken hundreds of years, and nearly 90% of the land has now been cleared for development. This has meant that an unknown number of plants and animals are now extinct from the area. There used to be kangaroos, koalas and emus, but without a place to live they can no longer be found.

Bandicoots, sugar gliders, echidnas and diamond pythons can still be found, but they are quite rare and are only in half of the remaining bushland. Careful management is needed to ensure that they do not also become extinct from Willoughby.

You can help by reporting the animals and birds that you see through the **Willoughby Wildlife Watch**, by having a bush-friendly backyard, getting rid of weeds, and by helping restore and maintain the bushland we have here through Bushcare.

Volume 3 of the Bushland **Plan of Management** has a list of plants native to specific areas of Willoughby. Each year Council holds the **Willoughby Fauna Fair**, an exciting event featuring games and activities for kids, information stalls about living with wildlife, free dog training, information on pet welfare and reducing our impact on wildlife, as well as exciting hands-on shows with Australian native animals.

You can view images of local wildlife in our **photo gallery**, or read more in the **Bushcare News**.

Further information on native birds, mammals, reptiles, frogs and invertebrates that inhabit our bushland and urban landscapes is available in *Willoughby's Wildlife* – a book describing where various animals are found, how they have adapted to the changing landscape, their habits and some of the threats to their survival. Also available is *Birds of Willoughby* which details a vast number of the feathered friends who have been spotted in our suburbs over the years.

The *Willoughby's Wildlife* and *Birds of Willoughby* books can be purchased for \$20 from the Help and Service Centre, Level 4, 31 Victor Street Chatswood.



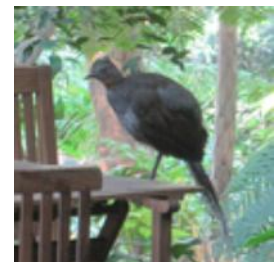
Brush Possum (WCC)



GreenTree Frog (Ada Burrowes)

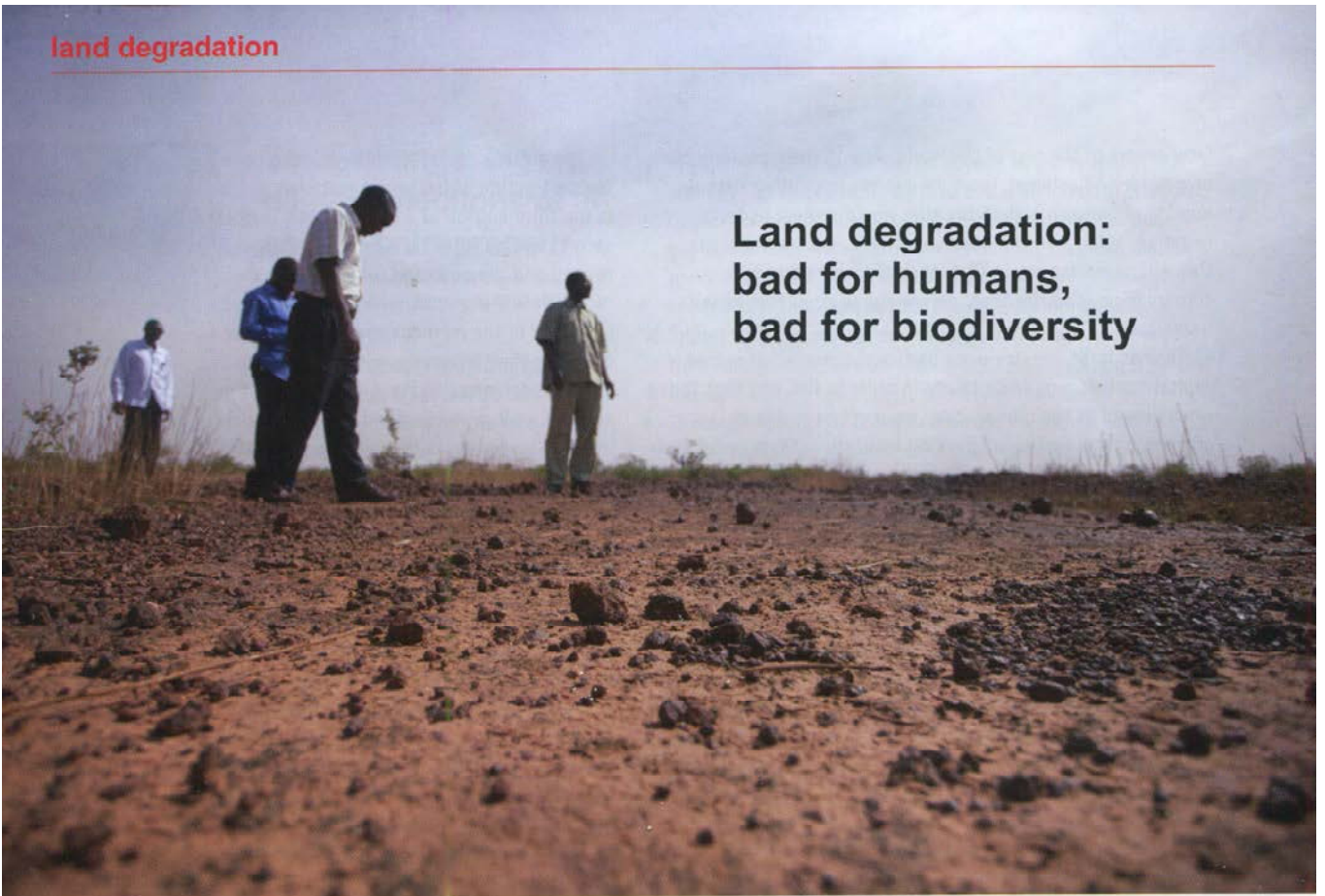


-Swamp Wallaby (Jude Morris)



Lyre Bird (Lorraine Cairnes)

Land degradation: bad for humans, bad for biodiversity



Land degradation – the loss of goods and services derived from our ecosystems, such as soil, vegetation and other plant and animal life – not only poses a serious threat to long-term food security but puts wildlife diversity in grave danger.

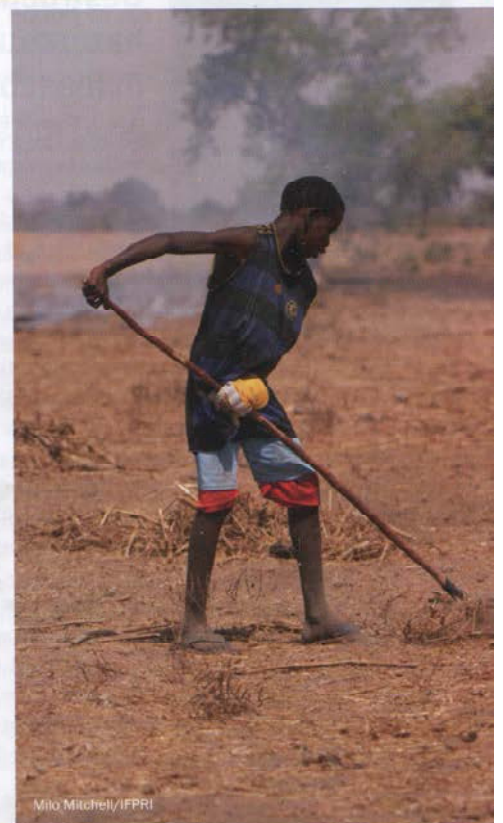
Taking the form of desertification, deforestation, overgrazing, salinisation or soil erosion, land degradation can be caused by biophysical factors, such as the natural topography of an area or its rainfall, wind and temperature; and unsustainable land management practices, such as deforestation, soil nutrient mining, and cultivation on steep slopes.

IFPRI Senior Researcher Ephraim Nkonya and his colleagues have been working to increase awareness of this problem and to push for comprehensive action to address it for many years. His work includes a 2011 book, where he and his co-authors point out that limited awareness and insufficient institutional support are paralysing action. They advise policymakers and the international community to:

- decentralise natural resource management, invest in agricultural research and development, and build local capacity for participatory programs to ensure clear property rights, legal protection, and enforcement of those rights
- prioritise investments to scale up applied research, such as rigorous assessments of the economic costs of land degradation, and ensure collaboration across regions and among scientists, socio-economists and policymakers
- follow models of influential global initiatives in related natural resource management areas, such as the Economics of Ecosystem Biodiversity study and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, involving all stakeholders in the process of global assessment.

(Above) Wind-eroded land. Ephraim Nkonya and colleagues in Niger

(Right) Land affected by wind erosion. A young boy rakes away crop covers in Senegal



Milo Mitchell/IFPRI

Things we learned this week about Abbott's wind turbine syndrome

Giles Parkinson on 19 June 2015

The wind industry is not welcome in Australia under a Tony Abbott government. That much we know: The PM said [so himself a week or two ago](#), admitting that the whole strategy since the election had been to reduce, or stop, the building of new wind turbines. Having created uncertainty about the policy environment, he hired a climate sceptic to conduct a review, and dragged out negotiations on a reduced target.



Now, the Abbott government is still throwing up roadblocks every which way it can. First it threatened not to drop the two-year review, then it inserted an “annual” check up by the Clean Energy Regulator, [then it threw native wood waste](#) into the equation, and now it has promised [to appoint a “wind commissioner”](#) and implement any recommendations that the current Senate wind inquiry may come up with.

The RET legislation is still not settled

But that might not be enough for the cross-bench Senators such as David Leyonhjelm and John Madigan, the anti-wind activists [who are controlling the Senate inquiry](#). Leyonhjelm indicated he was still unhappy with the Abbott government's offering – despite it successfully pre-empting almost word for word the preliminary findings of the wind inquiry that was released a day later. Leyonhjelm will seek more talks with Abbott over the weekend, suggesting that a deal on the RET is not yet done.

But why is Abbott negotiating with Leyonhjelm and the cross-benchers anyway? He has bipartisan agreement on a reduced RET target of 33,000GWh, and while Labor opposes native wood waste, they have made it clear they will not sacrifice the renewable legislation for the sake of a few eucalypts. It is clear that Abbott and Leyonhjelm are in furious agreement anyway. Leyonhjelm is simply giving him the opportunity to deliver on his hatred of wind farms. That interview with Alan Jones was no accident.

Who does Tony Abbott listen to?

Well, it's certainly not the Pope. Pope Francis issued his long-awaited [encyclical this week](#), acknowledging the “robust science” of climate change, and calling for the world to switch from fossil fuels to renewables. Prime Minister Tony Abbott is also a Catholic – and, like the Pope, a Jesuit – but

he is not listening. And neither is his Cabinet, of whom nearly half are also Catholic.

But the Pope is not the only person Abbott and his team are ignoring. The Pope joins [scientists, business leaders, economists, investors, doctors, trade unions, youth groups](#), and other [moral and spiritual leaders](#) around the world to call for a transition from dirty fossil fuels to a future powered by clean renewables, making the moral case for climate action as definitive and unassailable as the [97 per cent scientific consensus](#).

So who is Abbott listening to? How about The Institute of Public Affairs, miners, the Australian Business Council and other lobby groups, and the Murdoch media. It just so happens that the main advisors to Leyonhjelm and Madigan used to be with the Australian Environment Foundation, a spin-off from the IPA, Abbott's favourite think-tank. The IPA's former boss, Mike Nahan, boasts of the success of the AEF in holding back renewables. Nahan now runs energy policy in Western Australia. They fold in nicely with the views of Abbott's main business advisors, who appear to be all climate change deniers.

Fortunately, the IPA – which rejects climate science and advocates against renewables – has even offered guidance as to how a Catholic such as Abbott [might reasonably ignore the Pope](#). Someone called Father James Grant, described as an “adjunct fellow” of the IPA, said the Pope's encyclical was not Catholic doctrine, but a “personal position”.

Father James went on: “While it is reasonable for the Pope to use his moral authority on issues such as the Trinity or the nature of God, it is altogether different if a Catholic disagrees with a Pope on his environmental views.

“Climate change is a scientific debate. It is entirely legitimate for people of faith to disagree on the science of climate change and what, if anything, should be done about it. Catholics can feel safe in being sceptical about the Pope's opinions.” Phew.

Renew Economy June 18 2015

No need to investigate windfarms or alien abduction, says Greens leader Richard Di Natale –

Greens leader Richard Di Natale has slammed critics of windfarms, saying there is no need to investigate them. 'We don't have evidence of alien abduction – should we be spending public funds looking into it? No, we shouldn't', he says. Di Natale says there's no evidence wind turbines adversely affect people's health and that 'every cent we spend researching this nonsense is one less dollar not spent in cancer research, in diabetes research'

Australian Associated Press 19 June 2015 *TheGuardian*

Latrobe Valley residents to present GDF Suez with \$18m invoice for coalmine fire

More than 100 people affected by the 2014 Hazelwood mine fire, which blanketed Morwell in toxic smoke and ash for 45 days, will deliver request to the company's offices in Melbourne.

Community members affected by the 2014 Hazelwood mine fire are presenting an \$18m invoice to the owner of the mine at its Melbourne headquarters on Thursday 16 July.

The Guardian 18 July 2015

The New Cold War – The Arctic

The last great unprotected wilderness, safe haven for endangered species and home to native people whose subsistence lifestyle has survived in harmony with nature for thousands of years.

It is here that Shell plans to drill for oil, pulling the detonator on a carbon bomb which eventually could spray 150bn tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

The irony is that the drilling is only possible because manmade climate change is already causing this region to grow warmer twice as fast as the rest of the planet. The melting ice makes these huge reserves of oil and gas more accessible.

It could set major oil companies against each other but also superpower against superpower as they scramble to exploit the last untapped giant reserves in a part of the world where territorial boundaries remain unclear. No wonder some fear a new cold war.

The Guardian June 18 2015

Pope blasts global warming deniers

A draft of an environmental encyclical by Pope Francis says "the bulk of global warming" is caused by human activity. He calls on people - especially the world's rich - to take steps to mitigate the damage by reducing consumption and reliance on fossil fuels.

Pope Benedict proposed we should recognise that the natural environment is full of wounds produced by our irresponsible behaviour.

In words likely to anger some of his conservative critics, the Pope backs the science of climate change, saying "plenty of scientific studies point out that the last decades of global warming have been mostly caused by the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxide and others) especially generated by human action."

SMH June 16 2015

Coal seam gas licences cancelled after AGL reaches buyback deal with NSW Government

6 July 2015, ABC News

Campaigners fighting coal seam gas (CSG) activity north, south and west of Sydney are celebrating after a gas company sold three exploration licences back to the New South Wales Government.

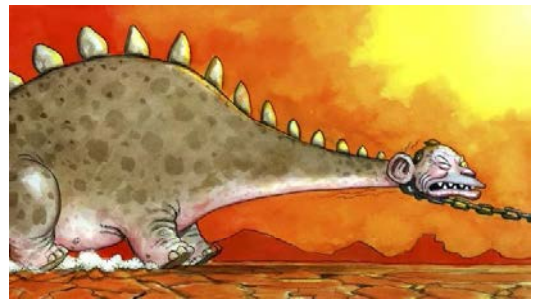
The Petroleum Exploration Licences (PELs) were bought back from AGL and cancelled by the Government as part of its wider review of the CSG industry in NSW. They covered 1.5 million hectares in the Hunter and Illawarra regions and west of Sydney. However not all groups think this step has gone far enough.

Stop CSG Sydney Water Catchment group president Brett Cottee said the organisation wanted the government to go further to legislate that no coal seam gas mining would occur in the water catchment area.

"We want no licences to be ever issued again."

Australia lagging on climate change response

Peter Hartcher *Sydney Morning Herald* June 23 2015



Ignoring the opportunity to set a world example in renewable power, the Abbott government will do as little as it can get away with in the global effort to calm global warming.



Carbon-belching coal fired plants are the bugbear of global efforts to rein in climate change.

Photo: Bloomberg

Rather than dwell on the past advantage of cheap coal, Abbott would do Australia and the world a favour by emphasising its future edge in renewable power. It's the least he could do. (Severely abridged from Hartcher's article)

Farmers say approval of a Liverpool Plains coal mine signs 'death warrants' of nearby farmers

The Planning Assessment Commission has approved the Shenhua Watermark Coal Mine.

The commission has determined the mine can operate until 2046.

The mine backs on to one of the largest agriculture producing regions in NSW and will be just 25 kilometres from Gunnedah.

In making its assessment, the commission considered the agricultural production rate was 40 per cent higher on the plains than the national average.

The commission approved the \$1.2 billion open cut coal mine with conditions including that it would not extract more than 10 million tonnes of coal per year and it must have a water management plan.

Barnaby Joyce opposes mine. He has come out in opposition of the project, saying the land it will encroach on is some of the best in the country. (But he was overruled by Tony Abbott.)

ABC News July 9 2015

Cancer-Causing Chemicals Found In Drinking Water Near Texas Fracking Sites

SAMANTHA PAGE JUNE 19, 2015 *Think Progress*

Scientists have found elevated levels of cancer-causing chemicals in the drinking water in North Texas' Barnett Shale region — where a fracking boom has sprouted more than 20,000 oil and gas wells.

Researchers from the University of Texas, Arlington tested water samples from public and private wells collected over the past three years and found elevated levels of heavy metals, such as arsenic. Their findings, released Wednesday, showed elevated levels of 19 different chemicals including the so-called BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene and xylenes) compounds.

Heavy metals are toxic when ingested, and BTEX compounds are considered carcinogenic when ingested. Exposure to BTEX compounds is also associated with effects on the respiratory and central nervous system. The study found elevated levels of toxic methanol and ethanol, as well.

The researchers were clear that they had not determined the source of the metals and chemicals. However, they noted that “many of the compounds we detected are known to be associated with [fracking] techniques,” and said the data support further research on the potential of fracking contamination.

In hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, oil and gas deposits in underground shale are extracted by forcing a mix of water and chemicals at high pressure into the earth.

According to the study, published in *Environmental Science & Technology*, chemical leaks can occur when well casings fail. Some estimates show this happens in approximately 3 percent of new gas well operations, but the researchers point out that recent data indicate well casing failure rates closer to 12 percent within the first year of well operation.

The risk of water contamination from fracking remains largely unknown. Dr. Kevin Schug, who led the UT study, told ThinkProgress that research funding remains a major hurdle.

“It’s challenging, but it’s necessary. The only way to really know the story is to keep doing these things and keep doing them over time,” he said.

To date, this is “the most comprehensive groundwater study in connection to this whole process,” Schug said.

The study comes on the heels of a broad Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report, which concluded that fracking has not led to “widespread, systemic” water contamination. While the report was touted by oil and gas interests as saying fracking is safe, it did find several specific instances of contamination from fracking and concluded that fracking creates several key vulnerabilities that could potentially undermine the health of drinking water in the United States.

Some environmentalists criticised the report, saying the EPA’s data was incomplete. “The EPA found disturbing evidence of fracking polluting our water despite not looking very hard. This study was hobbled by the oil industry’s

refusal to provide key data,” Kassie Siegel, senior counsel for the Center for Biological Diversity, said in an emailed statement to ThinkProgress.

The results of an investigation into the causes of two chemical spills in Arlington, Texas, also came out this week. The investigators found that the spills, which prompted the evacuation of nearly 100 homes near a Vantage Energy fracking site, were caused by the company’s faulty equipment. The results also revealed that the 911 call, made as chemical-laced water rushed down Arlington’s streets, originated from Vantage’s headquarters in Pennsylvania.

Oil and gas is big business in Texas, which passed a law this year that prevents towns and cities from banning fracking. Denton, which is located in the Barnett Shale region, was forced to revoke its ban — the first in Texas — this week, citing the cost of litigation.

Green groups feel squeeze over tax-deductible donations probe

SAMANTHA TRENOWETH

A new inquiry into environmental groups’ eligibility to receive tax-deductible donations appears to be the latest salvo in a sustained campaign to crush the green movement and starve it of funds.

The assessment from Bob Brown, former Greens leader and luminary of Australian environmentalism, is bleak and to the point: “There is a serious effort to bulldoze the environment movement and bury it.”

In the past couple of years, climate change infrastructure has been demolished, emissions trading put on ice. Scientists have been defunded and their ministry axed. Environmental Defenders Offices have also been defunded, the renewable energy sector thrown into chaos, the renewable energy target slashed and the astonishing notion mooted that we should burn trees to meet it.

Jeff Angel, executive director of the Total Environment Centre, believes the anti-green push is being driven by a combination of a far-right culture war in parliament and a mining industry in a hurry to dig up and sell off as many fossil fuels as possible. “The mining industry has always attacked the environment movement,” he explains, “but, in the last few years – with the carbon price, with the divestment push, with some wins in courts and planning inquiries, and with the very prominent campaign, during the last Queensland election, to save the [Great Barrier] Reef – the industry has been starting to feel the heat, so they’ve become more vicious.

Extracts from the article in *The Saturday Paper* June 27- July 3 2015

Adani halts engineering work on controversial Carmichael mine



A spokeswoman said it was Adani's practice not to comment on specific commercial arrangements. Photograph: Alamy
Joshua Robertson 24 June 2015 Abridged from *The Guardian*

Indian coal giant Adani has halted engineering work related to Australia's largest proposed mine, say industry sources, raising speculation that the company is set to abandon the contentious project.

Adani last week advised four major engineering contractors to stop work on projects around the Carmichael mine in Queensland including a joint venture rail line and the expansion of Abbot Point port, Guardian Australia has been told.

Industry sources said the move to suspend preparatory work by Worley Parsons and Aecon, Aurecon and SMEC at this stage of a project was unheard of and made no sense as a savings measure even amid delays.

It follows setbacks that have pushed back what would be Australia's largest coal project, including the forced scrapping of plans to dump dredge spoil from the port in Great Barrier Reef waters and then the Caley Valley.

Adani is also facing legal challenges from indigenous landholders and conservation groups, one of which is likely to push state government decisions on mining lease and environmental approvals back until the end of the year at least.

Adani's Carmichael mine: damage far outweighs benefits, lawyer claims.

It is understood a team of up to 40 engineers at Worley Parsons' Brisbane office, who were working with Aecon on the rail joint venture, were among those pulled off the project.

A senior engineering industry source said it was difficult to read the move as anything but "Adani beginning to run up the white flag" on the project.

On Adani coal mine, Abbott Gov't thinks it's above the law

In the wake of the Federal Court's decision on Wednesday, Minister Hunt and the Abbott government have mounted a savage attack on Mackay Conservation Group and Australia's environment laws.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has described any organisation's actions to protect the environment and uphold the law as an act of "sabotage".

In addition, instead of heeding the court's decision and respecting the independence of the judiciary, Minister Hunt is attacking the laws he has broken, threatening to shift the goal posts and placing threatened species throughout Australia in danger. The legal system is in place to protect us and the world around us. Clearly the government thinks it is above the law.

These laws protect not only yakka skinks and ornamental snakes, but all Australian plants and animals. Today it's the yakka skink, tomorrow it will be the koala.

Climate Spectator August 8, 2015

New analysis shows sea level rising faster



Research led by the University of Tasmania has revealed a more accurate picture of sea level rise in the satellite era, showing that it is in fact accelerating.

Analysing satellite data from 1993 to 2014, the team of scientists from the University and CSIRO used tide gauge data and GPS measurements of land movement to refine the satellite record.

The analysis found and corrected small inaccuracies in the existing satellite data, with results published today in *Nature Climate Change*.

Lead author on the research paper, Dr Christopher Watson from the University's School of Land and Food, said the satellite measurements of global mean sea level provide a seminal climate record.

"This information is vital as communities around the world plan and respond to our changing climate," Dr Watson said.

"Previously, it was clear that the rate of rise over the past 20 years was roughly double the rate determined over the past century – what was curious was that the rate appeared slower in the last decade relative to the one before."

"That slowing has puzzled scientists because it coincides with an increase in water entering our oceans from Greenland and West Antarctica."

Dr Watson said the research had highlighted a small overestimation of the sea level rise in the period from 1993 to 1999, which had been distorting the apparent trend.

"Unlike the previous slowing, an estimate of acceleration is striking in that it is consistent with the projections of future sea level published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change," Dr Watson said.

Co-author, Dr John Church from CSIRO said that projections are for up to a 98 cm rise by 2100 if global greenhouse gas emissions are allowed to continue unabated. "The projections reduce to a rise of between 28 and 61 cm if we follow paths that include very stringent mitigation of global emissions."

"Rising sea levels will place increasing stress on the coastal zone – inundation events will become more frequent and adaptation will need to occur," Dr Watson said.

Abridged from *Nature ClimateChange* June 2025

Australian Environment Foundation (AEF) launches

Let's go back a decade to World Environment Day, June 5, 2005, and the public launch of a new organisation, the Australian Environment Foundation, in Tenterfield in rural New South Wales.

The AEF was promoted as a “membership-based, environmental organisation having no political affiliation”, and which would take an “evidence-based” and “practical” approach to green issues.

It was nothing of the sort. It was a front organisation, its board stacked with senior figures from the IPA. The above-mentioned Mike Nahan was one of them. Its executive director was Max Rheese, an IPA stalwart.

For the first 18 months of its existence, Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) records show that the new organisation recorded as its principal place of business: “Institute of Public Affairs, Level 2, 410 Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic, 3000.”

The AEF's name was suspiciously similar to Australia's most venerable green group, the Australian Conservation Foundation, but the AEF's agenda was unambiguously anti-green. It opposed new marine parks and plans to increase environmental water flows in the Murray-Darling Basin. It was supportive of the Gunns' pulp mill in Tasmania and genetically modified foods. But mostly it was devoted to agitating against renewable energy.

The AEF's website linked to denialist organisations around the world. It helped organise anti-wind farm rallies, spun off other front organisations and provided logistical support and crowds to community groups scared of wind power. Events organised by the AEF featured speakers such as Alan Jones and South Australian senator Cory Bernardi, as well as a host of IPA members. One of its spinoff organisations, the Australian Climate Science Coalition, was subsequently revealed to be partly funded by the right-wing American organisation, the Heartland Institute, that is in turn heavily funded by US oil and gas interests.

The IPA has consistently denied ongoing links with this ersatz environmental organisation, but the most recent filing with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission shows Alan Moran and Bob Carter still as AEF directors. Both have IPA ties.

For eight years, the AEF was very active and quite well funded. Its media statements were widely picked up, particularly in the Murdoch press.

But over the past couple of years, it has been moribund. Wind-power advocates, who keep an eye on these things, say its website has not been updated for more than a year. ACNC records show it raised a paltry \$3872 in the year to June 30, 2014, plus “other income” of \$4490.

Brian Wawn, one of the AEF's current directors, assured *The Saturday Paper*: “The AEF is on the point of being revived. There were some funding arrangements which fell through and the person doing the website went elsewhere. But it's on the road to recovery now.”

Perhaps. But the decline of the AEF has coincided with the rise of another apparently well-resourced anti-wind site, called Stop These Things, whose authors and funding are as

yet a mystery. But it is very active, very nasty and appears to be very well resourced.

Ketan Joshi, research and communications officer for Australia's biggest wind company, Infigen Energy, is one who has been trying to crack the mystery of who is behind Stop These Things, not least because he is personally nettled by the fact that it regularly mocks his southern Asian name as “Rogan Joshi”.

His view is that the AEF has been allowed to decline because under the Abbott government it is no longer necessary. “I think their tactics have shifted to influencing politics from the inside. The senate wind inquiry is the new frontier.”

The facts lend credence to this theory. The long-time head of the AEF, Max Rheese, is these days chief of staff for David Leyonhjelm. Other anti-wind agitators – some IPA-connected, some not – have turned up in other staff roles.

Brendan Gullifer, for example, a former journalist awarded a “journalist of the year award” in 2011 by *windturbinesyndrome.com*, and identified by several pro-wind activists as the most hostile to their cause, is now Madigan's chief of staff.

The anti-wind, pro-fossil-fuel forces these days are still working by the Big Tobacco playbook, but using a different page. It's more about mounting the big political argument than working the grassroots.

Jessica Craven, now media adviser to the Australian Climate Council but formerly a public health advocate, points to the way cigarette companies responded to early health concerns about their product by promoting filtered cigarettes. “Now we have fossil-fuel companies talking about ‘clean coal,’” she says. “It's very similar. And the whole coal/poverty argument that we now see being used a lot by the Minerals Council – that was developed by ex-tobacco people.”

Indeed it was. It was part of a strategy developed by the giant US public relations and lobbying firm Burson-Marsteller, whose list of credits includes work for Philip Morris.

The campaign Burson-Marsteller put together last year for the world's biggest coal company, Peabody Energy, under the rubric “Advanced energy for life”, not only emphasised the myth of clean coal, it ran the line that the best way for the poor nations of the world to lift their economies was to bring power to the people. Coal-fired power.

As Craven points out, fossil-fuel advocates all over the world, including in this country, have since adopted the strategy. So has the Australian government, particularly Tony Abbott. His line “coal is good for humanity” is much punchier than “advanced energy for life.”

The anti-wind lobby has moved onwards and upwards. Under the previous Labor government they were outsiders, albeit backed by powerful interests in the mining industry, media and right-wing think tanks.

Part of the report *Tobacco playbook to kill renewables* by Mike Secombe in *The Saturday Paper* July 27–August 3 2015

Bushland

The Willoughby Local Government Area is home to significant areas of native bushland. This bushland is fragmented throughout Willoughby, with large concentrations along the Lane Cove River and along Middle Harbour. Council controls and cares for around 300 hectares of bushland, while some is privately owned or belongs to other Government organisations.

Bushland is a valuable community resource. It contains native flora and fauna and archaeological sites. It also stabilises soil and increases surrounding land values. There are many **bushwalks** in Willoughby's bushland reserves.

What threatens our bushland?

- Weed invasion
- Pets and feral animals
- Dumping of rubbish, including weeds and other plant material
- Stormwater and urban run-off, including erosion
- Clearing for residential and development purposes
- Removal of plants, logs and rocks
- Fragmentation into even small areas

How can we protect our bushland?

- Remove identified weeds from your garden and replace them with non-invasive species
- Get free help identifying native and weed plants from Council's **Greenstyle** Officer
 - Don't let your garden grow outside your own property
 - Don't dump garden waste or other rubbish in bushland
 - Keep pets away from native wildlife
 - Join a **Bushcare** group
 - Learn more by attending workshops, open days and seminars -

The Conservation Society has received from the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife a copy of their PAWS newsletter – Winter 2015.

In 2014 the Foundation provided funds to proclaim five properties in South Australia as additions to the protected area system. In 2015...the purchase of a sixth South Australian property.

The Foundation recently gave \$14,000 towards eradicating weed infestation on a remote island in the Bass Strait – Deal Island.

In 2014 the Foundation gave over \$15,000...to help protect an endangered bioregion – the Stony Knoll Shrubland. Invasive grasses are threatening the local ecosystem.

The Foundation has been involved in an ongoing project, since 2006, to help restore the Yarrahapinni Wetland on the NSW coast.

The Foundation encourages everyone to get involved in their own backyard through the Backyard Buddies education program.

Funds are available to landholders who have conservation protection on their land – properties at Craven on the Buckett's Way, and another near Bulahdelah received grants in 2014.



Epacris longiflora (Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd)

The World Heritage decision is final: the Australian Government is on probation and must improve the health of the Reef.



The delegate from Germany summed up the situation best when he said:

“It’s a plan. As with every plan, it’s only as good as its implementation. There’s still a long way to go, the commitments need to be put into legislation and adequate sustainable financing needs to be secured.”

This is huge news for the Reef. Your support pushed the government to commit to ban dredging and minimise dumping on the Great Barrier Reef. It pushed them to develop the Reef2050 plan. And **now you’ve secured the backing of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, to hold our Governments accountable for real action.**

Dermot O’Gorman, WWF-Australia August 1

Great Barrier Reef water quality to be monitored in real time in pollution crackdown

Queensland government defends coalminer's investment in online tracking tool, which will be showcased to world heritage committee ahead of Unesco's final ruling on 'in danger' listing.

The Queensland government will use new real-time water quality monitoring to take action against industrial and agricultural polluters of the Great Barrier Reef, says the state environment minister.

Steven Miles also defended the role of the state's largest coalminer, BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA), as a cornerstone investor in the "eReef" tool, despite carbon-driven climate change being the reef's greatest long-term threat.

The online tracking, which models the effect of sediment and chemicals in reef waters via satellite, will be showcased to world heritage committee members in Germany next week before Unesco's final ruling on whether to list the reef as "in danger."

Asked whether BMA's involvement in the project was ironic, Miles said the miner's contribution showed their "commitment to ... managing whatever impacts their business might be having on the reef".

Joshua Robertson 26 June 2015 *The Guardian* July 27 2015

Australia trashes renewable energy target

Ben Courtice

June 26, 2015 *Green Left Weekly*



The federal government will create a commissioner to monitor wind farms.

On June 23, Australia's parliament voted to reduce the Renewable Energy Target for 2020 from 41 to 33 terawatt hours of renewable electricity, following a long struggle by the government to win support from minor party Senators for the cuts.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott said he "would frankly have liked to reduce the number a lot more".

The deal he cut in the Senate will see the potential for "wood waste" from logging of native forests to be burned to generate "renewable electricity" as part of the target.

A "wind farms commissioner" is to be created, one of the gestures to win the support of anti-wind farm Senators such as John Madigan, Bob Day and David Leyonhjelm who have been running a Senate inquiry into wind farms.

Labor provisionally supported the reduction to 33 terawatt hours, on the basis that settling on a firm target would end the uncertainty for investors and allow planned projects to get finance to proceed.

Shadow Minister for the Environment Mark Butler suggested the deal would be displeasing to Abbott, since "those wind farms he finds so utterly offensive can start being built again".

Friends of the Earth campaigner Leigh Ewbank told *Green Left Weekly* that the big picture of the cuts was still negative.

"While some projects will be built as a result of this compromise deal, there are thousands of megawatts of wind farms that won't be built because Tony Abbott has cut the target by 20%," Ewbank said.

The Yes2Renewables campaign that Ewbank coordinates has followed the Senate Inquiry set up by independent Senator John Madigan closely.

"It's clear that Madigan's wind energy witch hunt has aimed to demonise wind energy technology," Ewbank said. "I think most Australians would agree with me that Senator Bob Day's suggestion that the sensations people are attributing to wind farms are akin to the impact of exposure to asbestos is laughable."

Ewbank thinks the role of a Wind Farms Commissioner can only be negative. "Given the track record of opposition to wind energy from the Senators behind the inquiry, it's difficult to conclude that the role will be impartial. It seems likely the role is intended to create more uncertainty for the sector."

The full-scale attack on the wind farm industry has, predictably, been met with carefully timed attacks in mainstream media columns.

Former Institute of Public Affairs director Alan Moran wrote in the *Australian Financial Review* that wind farms "need three times the price at which Australian coal generators can supply electricity".

Melbourne University researcher Dylan McConnell debunked the spin at *The Conversation*, pointing out that Moran had compared the short-run (fuel) cost of coal to the long-run cost of wind energy.

While wind energy has zero short-run cost, at long run costs, new wind farms now cost as much as coal and possibly less. In fact, McConnell points out, wind farms are expected to save money for electricity consumers.

The Australian Forests and Climate Alliance (AFCA) condemned the decision to include so-called "wood waste" in the target.

We are going back to using dirty medieval technology that pretends to be sustainable and clean," said spokesperson [Jill Redwood in a media release](#). "In reality it will undermine real renewables like solar and wind. It will produce more emissions than burning coal and cause immense loss of ecosystems, wildlife and our greatest carbon stores."

AFCA's Lorraine Bower has explained that up to 90% of a forest that is logged can be defined as waste. "'Waste' can be defined as any log that does not have a higher commercial purpose", comprise 90 per cent of the timber extracted from a forest." **continued next page**

Ewbank is optimistic that new wood-waste burners will not get built despite provision for them in the deal. "What this decision has done has united pro-renewable energy advocates and the battle hardened forest protection movement. Groups such as Friends of the Earth and The Wilderness Society will be paying close attention to any plans to generate electricity from native forests," he said.

Yes2Renewables is looking to state and territory governments, including Labor governments in South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT, to pick up the slack in building new renewable energy. We are encouraged by Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews' commitment to reinstate a Victorian Renewable Energy Target," Ewbank said.

UN World Heritage Committee calls for major changes to Tasmanian Government's forests plan

2 July 2015, ABC News Abridged

The UN's key environment committee has reiterated its criticism of the Tasmanian Government's latest plans for its World Heritage forests at a meeting in Germany.

The 21 countries on UNESCO's World Heritage Committee adopted an earlier draft decision without any further discussion, which rejected much of the Tasmanian Government's proposed management plan.

The Government wants to open up just under 200,000 hectares for logging of some kind, about 12 per cent of the World Heritage Area (WHA).

UNESCO, however, urged the Government "to review the proposed new management plan for the property to ensure that it provides adequate protection for its OUV [outstanding universal value]" and to "ensure that commercial logging and mining are not permitted within the entire property".

The draft plan at a glance:

- About 1.5 million hectares, a quarter of Tasmania, is covered by the World Heritage listing
- The area contains diverse land types with unique biodiversity, combined with Aboriginal sites
- Introduced in January this year by the Tasmanian Government, the draft plan allows low-scale tourism ventures in the World Heritage Area
- It scraps the dominant wilderness zone and replaces it with a remote recreation zone
- The change allows for basic accommodation, some logging of specialty timber, and some mining activity
- The management plan has been met with support from the tourism industry and strong opposition from environmental groups.

UNESCO has urged the State Government to revise its draft management plan by early 2016.

The World Heritage Committee said the plan should be amended to allow no potential for logging in the 1.5-million-hectare WHA.

The committee also warned that rezoning the area from "wilderness" to "remote recreation" zone did not capture the area's true character.

It has recommended the Federal Government invite delegations from key international conservation groups to Tasmania.

The criticism of Tasmania's forests plan follows a World Heritage Committee decision on Wednesday not to declare the Great Barrier Reef as "in danger".

Last month Premier Will Hodgman said he did not rule out the idea of mining parts of the WHA.

Tasmania's Environment Minister Matthew Groom acknowledged the committee's concerns and said they would be taken into consideration when reviewing the management plan.

He said provision for speciality timber logging in the plan was being distorted in the debate by green groups for their own political purposes.

"One of the things that has been disappointing through this debate, and frankly misleading, is the suggestion that the Tasmanian Government, through this management plan, has sought to expand mining or engage in industrial logging inside the World Heritage Area.

" This is a line which is being pushed by some of the environmental groups and so ... I understand and respect the World Heritage Committee's concern but that is not the intent of the Tasmanian Government."

But Mr Groom said his Government remained committed to opening the area up to eco-tourism developments.

"In developing the new management plan our objective is to facilitate new sensitive tourism experiences within the World Heritage Area in a manner that is consistent with the proper protection of its Outstanding Universal Values.

"We do not want to see its values compromised."

Coalition bans government's clean energy bank from financing wind power

Trade minister confirms Clean Energy Finance Corporation will no longer invest in wind projects, but disputes report that Greg Hunt was outmanoeuvred.

The federal government has ordered the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) not to make any future investments in wind power, instead focussing on "emerging technologies", trade minister Andrew Robb has confirmed. Fairfax media reported on Sunday that the treasurer, Joe Hockey, and the finance minister, Mathias Cormann, bypassed the environment minister, Greg Hunt, in issuing the CEFC with the directive.

Shalailah Medhora 12 July 2015 *The Guardian*

"I believe Tony Abbott's becoming a very real threat to the Australian way of life. This guy is out of control."

Labor's agriculture spokesman, Joel Fitzgibbon.