



# Castlecrag Conservation Society Inc

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

Newsletter No 101

*CONSERVATION UP- DATE*

**November 2015**

## **Next Meeting      Global Rallies – Urgent Climate Change**

**It's Time, it's time** for governments to take urgent action on climate change. But they won't do it unless there is pressure from a broad movement of people who elected them. As Naomi Klein says “ *To help build this broad movement, **global rallies are being organised** over the weekend of November 28-29 to coincide with another round of UN climate negotiations in Paris.*”

So a mass rally will be held in Sydney on Sunday 29th November at 1pm. CCS will be marching under our own banner. Please be active on this critical issue and join us on

**Sunday 29 November 2015**

**1pm**

**Meet at the Domain - the entrance at the rear of Sydney Hospital. (Go through Sydney Hospital from Macquarie St across Hospital Road to where we will be standing with our CCS banner)**

This is not our usual end of year meeting. It differs in that we can be involved in a common cause to protect our environment, our civilisation and the future generations. So come rally with members and friends and join the Castlecrag contingent.

*“We wish a Merry Xmas and a Peaceful New Year”*

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## Quotes & Sayings

### Hiroshima remembers atomic bomb: ‘

Abolish the evil of nuclear weapons. Japan’s Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, said Japan would submit a new resolution to the UN general assembly this autumn calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. He would “encourage world leaders to get firsthand accounts of the tragic reality of atomic bombings” during next year’s G7 foreign ministers’ meeting in the city.

The Guardian, August 6, 2015

### Atomic plague

Seventy years ago, on September 5, 1945, Wilfred Burchett’s report on the aftermath of the Hiroshima atomic bombing was published in London’s Daily Express. Burchett was the first Western journalist to enter Hiroshima after the bombing and was shocked by the devastation. Under the banner “I write this as a warning to the world”, Burchett [described](#) a city reduced to “reddish rubble” and people dying from an unknown “atomic plague”.

The Conversation, Sept 4, 2015

### Adani coal mine

Breaking news: Abbott moves to shut down entire court systems as “un-Australian” [Ben facebook.com/smh](#)

Reminds me of a quote from Christine Milne “Do you want coal or do you want death?” [Bravo smh.com.au](#)

The world needs yakka skins so much more than it needs Gautam Adani. [Jagdish smh.com.au](#)

Quotes from The Forum, *The Sun-Herald* August 9 2015

### Another bank pulls out!

[Standard Chartered](#) bank is pulling out of a vast coalmining project in Australia that critics say threatens endangered species and could wreck international efforts to contain global warming.

The London-based bank revealed on Monday it was giving up its role advising the Indian conglomerate, Adani, on building one of the world’s biggest [coalmines](#) in Queensland.

*The Guardian*, August 10, 2015

### A working fusion reactor

More lies from the Murdoch press and the Abbott Government. People who actually think know this. We have a very nice working fusion reactor at the safe distance of 150 million km, which delivers a continuous 174 petawatts of energy to Earth FREE of charge. It has sufficient fuel to continue operation for several billion years and its rate of fuel consumption is completely unaffected by anything we do with the delivered energy at this end.

Compare this with all the costs associated with digging coal and extracting fossil fuels and the economic argument just goes away.

Ken Dyer Comment in *The Conversation* August 10, 2015

### Hocus Pokus !

Liberal Cory Bernardi rose to his feet and began by saying that everyone in the room knew that “I don’t buy into this “hocus pokus” of climate change”.

Peter Hartcher *News Review* August 15-16, 2015

## Is Code 10/50 a tool for Bushfire mitigation or a tool for Urban Bushland annihilation?

A current example is in Hunters Hill where the developer has removed some 33 significant native trees despite a Land and Environment Court ruling that the retention of these trees was in the community interest. The DA approved the removal of 10 trees but by using Code 10/50 the developer was able to measure 10 metres from SIX neighbouring properties to take out 33 trees. He was stopped from removing two because they were 11 metres from a dwelling.

### Please demand the Repeal of this shocking legislation ASAP.



Gaye White representing Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society.

email September 10, 2015

PS Under pressure from communities the Government recently reduced the areas where the rule applies from 350m to 100m distance from bushfire prone areas. That’s not good enough. We’re losing thousands of trees across NSW every month, and vital wildlife habitat, for reasons nothing do with preventing bushfires. We need to pressure the Government to announce an immediate repeal of this indiscriminate and destructive urban land clearing rule.

Nature Conservation Council NSW

**PPS** In the last several weeks a very large Angophora has been cut down in Tor Walk, Castlecrag. Here in Castlecrag we are losing many trees which along with other native flora have made our suburb unique in Willoughby. Ed.

### Amalgamation risk for our environment

Among the many things at risk is Council’s eRestore Program. On the strength of its submission to the former State Government, Willoughby Council was given permission by the former minister for Local Government to charge residents an Environmental Levy, in perpetuity, to fund the excellent eRestore Program which has huge public support. The eRestore Program might be seen as low-hanging fruit in any budget-cutting exercise. This may be a foretaste of what is to come with council amalgamation. (WEPA N/L Nov 2015)

## Council Amalgamation

Last Monday night, 9th November 2015, Willoughby Council voted to support a voluntary merger with North Sydney Council.

Councillor Wendy Norton deserves congratulations for standing up for residents and LOCAL government. Her position is also supported by Councillor Saville.

Council has succumbed to the bullying by the State Government and gone against the majority recommendation of residents, against the advice of its citizen's panel and against its own proposal to Stand Alone, which it submitted to the government to assert it is Fit for the Future.

IPART handed its 'Assessment of Council Fit for the Future Proposals' to the State Government in October 2015, judging most of the councils in NSW as 'Unfit'. However of the 87 proposals it received, 60 of those were found to be financially fit. Willoughby is in the best or second best financial position of any of the councils in NSW.

Councils were given a 'Fail' mark and labelled 'unfit' because they had not agreed to merge to form mega-councils and thus failed to comply with the threshold criterion of Scale and Capacity. Scale relates to population size and a merger between Willoughby and North Sydney will not achieve this. Blacktown Council was judged 'financially unfit', yet has been assessed as Fit for the Future simply because it passes the scale i.e. population size, criterion.

Although IPART was required to take into account "the social and community context and outcomes for each council" it has ignored the benefits of local government staying local. It has taken on the view of the Independent Local Government Review Panel (IGLRP) that bigger is better, regardless of the fact that there is no evidence to support this and IPART's Terms of Reference do not include it. Thus the process was rigged from the start.

The findings were only made public because of intense pressure from the Save Our Councils Coalition (SOCC), Local Government NSW (LGNSW) and individual councils.

### Baird's Ultimatum

On October 20, 2015, Premier Mike Baird handed down a 30 day Ultimatum to Councils - Amalgamate or else. He said councils had 30 days to find other councils to amalgamate with.

Mayors were also instructed in a webinar conference that there was to be **no consultation with the community**. In any case there had been no community consultation about IPART's proposed amalgamations. Willoughby was to be part of a mega-council comprising Mosman, North Sydney, Lane Cove Hunters Hill and part of Ryde. So much for democracy.

Councils' responses to the ultimatum are done on line. They have been given drop down boxes in which to nominate their

first, second and third merger preferences. There is no opportunity for them to lodge a Stand Alone preference, other than to lodge a nil return.

To reinforce the State Government's heavy hand, councillors received letters on 11/11/15 indicating they were required to come to a census supporting amalgamation. So much for democracy.

### What if councils refuse?

Mike Baird has been asked many times what will happen if councils refuse to merge, however he has consistently refused to answer. He refuses to rule out forced amalgamations, even though prior to the state election, both he and our local member Gladys Berejiklian, as well as most of his Liberal MP colleagues, said they do not support forced amalgamations.

### No mandate

The Mayor of Lane Cove, Cllr Deborah Hutchens has said "Adding further insult to injury is the lack of transparency from the State Government at the last election. They didn't tell the community they would be forcing local government mergers so they have no mandate to unilaterally decrease local democracy". (from the Council's website).

Although the Lower House accepted IPART's assessment, the government does not have the numbers in the Upper House to pass a bill allowing forced amalgamations because Labor, the Greens, the Shooters and Fishers party, the Christian Democrats Party and the Animal Justice Party are all strongly opposed to forced amalgamations.

### Upper House Inquiry

After failing to pass the Government's legislation the Upper House set up an inquiry into the Fit for the Future program, releasing the results on 29 October 2015. It strongly rejected IPART's assessments. Its first recommendation was :

"That the Premier and the NSW Government withdraw the statements that 71% of councils in metropolitan Sydney and 56% of regional councils are "unfit".

On the threshold criterion, Scale and Capacity, which has been the blunt instrument used to threaten councils, the Report of the Upper House Inquiry states:

"Scale and Capacity was the criterion for Fit for the Future proposals and, in the committee's view, the most problematic. The key problems with this criterion were that it was ill-defined and difficult to objectively measure. The committee is of the view that any criteria for making assessments about local councils should be clearly defined, objective, measurable and verifiable, particularly if those assessments may lead to widespread structural reforms. It is the committee's opinion that the scale and capacity criterion does not satisfy those parameters. Accordingly it was not an appropriate criterion to include in the Fit for the Future Assessment criteria".

There was a dissenting report by the three committee members. Unfortunately, as you would expect.

# Logging could cause koala extinction

## Forest groups demand NSW government halt logging to save koalas

By Kathy Fairfax



If logging continues in koala habitat they may become extinct on the NSW north coast.

Forest conservation groups have demanded that the New South Wales government immediately halt logging operations in state forest areas known to be koala habitat. They fear that proposals by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to allow clear felling of large areas of forests on the NSW north coast could be the catalyst that tips the area's koalas onto the path to extinction.

The Nature Conservation Council (NCC), the National Parks Association (NPA), and the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) say that after a parliamentary inquiry revealed serious deficiencies in the EPA's regulation of forestry operations in NSW, they have no confidence logging in these critical habitat areas will be properly controlled.

NCC CEO Kate Smolski: "If nothing changes, the list of animal and plants species facing extinction in NSW is on track to reach 1000 by 2020. Even a species as iconic and beloved as the koala is at great risk of extinction in parts of the state, including on the north coast, if urgent action is not taken to reduce threats to its survival.

"I call on the state's leading political parties to acknowledge the urgency of the threats facing koalas and place an immediate ban on logging in koala habitat. These forests are too precious to lose, and we will fight to make sure future generations have a chance to enjoy intact native forests and iconic species like the koala just as we do today."

Abridged from *Green Left Weekly*, August 4, 2015

## Science is the the basis of progress

"When I think about science, I think of the role it will play as we strive to solve, adapt, mitigate or manage many of the great challenges that face us as humanity.

I think of climate change. And I think of the evidence that relentlessly accumulates that we and our actions are changing our planet. Science provides that evidence and it will present us with options to manage, mitigate or adapt to the changes".

**Professor Ian Chubb is Australia's Chief Scientist.**

SMH August 17, 2015

## No support for the Fit for the Future process

The process is no longer supported by Labor, the Greens, the Shooters and Fishers Party, the Christian Democrats party, the Animal Justice Party and independent MPs.

It is not supported by most Councils, Councillors, Mayors and council staff.

It is not supported by LGNSW, the Metropolitan Mayors Forum, and the Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government.

If the government decides to force amalgamations against the wishes of councils it must send the amalgamation proposals through a rigorous process that must involve the independent Boundaries Commission.

## Where is Willoughby?

Many councils have held packed public meetings to gauge community support for the proposed mergers. In our area Mosman, North Sydney, Lane Cove and Ryde have all held public meetings which have rejected mergers and are publicly demonstrating their opposition. Lane Cove and Hunters Hill are festooned with banners and signs on the theme 'Keep Local Government Local'. (The others may have too, but I haven't been there. Ed.)

Unfortunately Willoughby has kept a very low profile. It has failed to hold a public meeting. It has refused to join the non-party- politically aligned Save Our Councils Coalition. In Monday night's debate, a motion to include the words "We oppose forced amalgamation" in council's allotted 50 word comment in their reply to the Government, was lost on the Mayor's casting vote. It also refused to write to the Premier, the Minister and our local member making this point. One resident speaking on Monday night criticised Council for not being aggressive in pursuing the issue.

In fact Willoughby Council has been missing in action.

Reproduced from WEPA's Newsletter, November 2015

## 2015 CCS Executive & Committee

<b>President</b>	<b>Mark Crew</b>
<b>Vice-President</b>	<b>Chris Hopwood</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Terese Hayward</b>
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<b>Committee</b>	<b>Richard Blacklock, Gay Spies, Harold Spies</b>

# Ignoring environment will cost more

Ross Gittins

Abridged from *SMH* August 19, 2015

Two characteristic of economists stand out when it comes to climate change. First, they accept what the scientists are telling us without argument. Unlike some, they're not disposed to explain to the experts where they're getting it wrong.

Second, they don't believe we can go on thinking "the economy" can be kept in a separate box to "the environment". There are major interactions between the two that can't be ignored.

But, as a journalist, I'm not a member of the economists' union, so to speak, so let me stop describing their majority views and give you mine. My thinking has been influenced by the more radical opinions of yet another economist, Professor Herman Daly, of the University of Maryland.

In defending his latest target, Abbott pledged he'd never put the environment ahead of the economy and jobs. This separate-box thinking is like saying you'd never put staying alive ahead of going to work. Lose your life and whether you get to work or not hardly matters.

Daly says the economy is a "wholly owned subsidiary of the environment". Whether at a national or global level, the economy exists inside the environment – the ecosystem. It's a box inside a circle, if you like.

The point is, all human activity – all our producing and consuming – depends directly on the natural environment. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the shelters we build and the energy we use all come from the ecosystem that surrounds us.

Much of our economic activity involves misusing, overusing and abusing the natural environment. We've done great damage to our soil, rivers and aquifers, we've destroyed much habitat and many species, and now the world's overuse of fossil fuels is playing havoc with the climate.

We can be divided into those who want to do what we can to stop the destruction and start on the clean-up, and those who want to put it out of mind and keep on as we are, leaving the bill to be picked up by the next generation.

The latter group will always justify their insouciance by claiming to be putting jobs first. Yeah, sure. For the next few years, at least.

Let me be honest with you. I don't believe those modelling exercises seeming to prove that the economic costs of acting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will be minor. Such results are a product of the assumptions built into all conventional economic models that, whatever shock the economy is hit by, after 20 years or so, everything will be back to where it would have been.

So, the cost in terms of growth and jobs forgone might be greater than we're being told. But of one thing I'm sure: the longer we leave it, the higher those costs will be.

# Fossil fuel industry must 'implode' to avoid climate disaster, says top scientist

'The age of carbon is over' and a transition to a greener economy is inevitable, says Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, adviser to the German government and Pope Francis



Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, founding director of the Potsdam Institute.

An "induced implosion" of the fossil fuel industry must take place for there to be any chance of avoiding dangerous global warming, according to one of the world's most influential climate scientists.

Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, an adviser to the German government and Pope Francis, said on Friday: "In the end it is a moral decision. Do you want to be part of the generation that screwed up the planet for the next 1,000 years? I don't think we should make that decision."

*The Guardian*, August 1, 2015

# Hunt approves Carmichael mega-coal mine and rail project, again

Sophie Vorrath on 15 October 2015 *Renew Economy*

Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt has given the green light to the Carmichael coal mine and rail infrastructure development in Queensland, just two months after his original approval of the controversial and economically questionable project was overturned by the Federal Court.

Hunt said in a media statement on Thursday afternoon that his decision to re-approve what would be the biggest new coal mine in Australia was in accordance with national environmental law and in consideration of additional information provided by the project's Indian developer, Adani Group, as well as by local environmental groups, including the Mackay Conservation Group, the Environmental Defenders Office and the Australian Conservation Foundation

Opponents have already flagged an intention to launch a legal challenge to the latest approval. [The ACF has lodged a challenge, based on insufficient weight having been given to World Heritage legislation. Ed.]

The government decision clears a regulatory hurdle, yet there are still questions over how the \$16 billion project will be financed. National Australia Bank has said it **will not fund the mine** and other banks are being pressured to follow suit.

Federal Labor resources spokesman Gary Gray welcomed the decision and said the project was of "great importance to Queensland and to Australia".

# Palm Oil Industry Tied to Ecocide in Guatemalan River

Jeff Abbott 6 July 2015 *Upside down world*



Fisherman stands next to dead fish in Río La Pasión. Photo: PrensaLibre.com

The Pasión River in northern Guatemala is a disaster area. Beginning on June 6, residents along the river in the municipality of Sayaxché, Peten, began to find millions of fish, their primary source of food and income, floating dead in the river. Community members quickly accused the Palm firm, *Reforestadora de Palma del Peten, S.A* (REPSA) of contaminating the river. Communities have called the pollution of their river an “ecocide.”

“Unfortunately, there has been a massive pollution of our river,” said Rigoberto Lima, a community representative from Sayaxché. “We need to put an end to the problem of palm in northern Guatemala.”

The Public Ministry of Guatemala initially declared a red alert on June 11; days after the fish first began to appear floating in the river. The Public Ministry initially confirmed that the disaster was caused by run off of the pesticide Malathion into the river, but in the weeks after, they would take back the accusations against the palm company.

However, these accusations were supported by a toxicological study performed by University of San Carlos, which found elevated levels of the pesticide, and other agro-chemicals in the river. The report determined that the local palm industry was responsible for the contamination.

The contamination affects 106 kilometers of river, and 65 communities. These poor communities have all been forced to rely more and more on the river for their sustenance because of the expansion of palm in the region.

Communities have called on the government to perform an investigation into the pollution of the river.

Late in the evening of June 23, nearly 45 members of communities along the Pasión River arrived to Guatemala City to denounce the pollution of their river. Following a late afternoon press conference, the community members began a sit-in outside the offices of the Presidential Commission Against Discrimination and Racism in Guatemala City to

condemn and repudiate the contamination of their river by the palm company. They also demanded that the company be temporarily shut down for threatening life, and that they be allowed to be involved in the investigation of what occurred in Pasión River in order to ensure transparency.

The following day, members of the Public Ministry visited the encampment. Community members expressed frustration at being treated with disrespect and contempt by the state and the firm.

## Denial of Responsibility

On June 17, the company, the mayor of Sayaxché, and community members gathered in Guatemala City to sign a document stating that the company “was not responsible for the death of the fish,” and that there “was no ecocide.” In exchange for the signing of the document, the company agreed to provide the communities with water, the improvement of town streets, and the construction of wells.

The document also states that the company is committed to taking better care of the river, but they stress, “They are not the cause of the killing of fish.”

REPSA is a subsidiary of the powerful Grupo Olmeca, Guatemala’s largest palm oil producer, which is owned by the powerful Molina family. The conglomerate was the first to begin the production of African palm in the late 1980s, and today cultivates nearly 46,000 hectares of land in Escuintla, Ocos in San Marcos, and Coatepeque in Quetzaltenango, and Sayaxché.

## Continuous Pollution

This isn’t the first time that communities in Guatemala have accused the palm industry of polluting their rivers.

Communities in the Municipality Chisec, Alta Verapaz filed a complaint in the Guatemalan Public Ministry against the Ixcan Palm Company in 2013, for the contamination of their river. The following year, communities in Peten also filed a complaint in the Public Ministry against the pollution of their river. In both cases, the Public Ministry failed to investigate the contamination.

“This is not the first time that the fish have died in our rivers,” said Margarita, a representative from the Organization of Women of Alta Verapaz. “In 2013, there was massive death of fish in the rivers of northern Chisec. We have made denouncements against the palm firms in the region.”

The Public Ministry and Environmental ministry have called previous contaminations “accidents,” which have not resulted in new regulations.

The failure of the government ministries to respond to the concerns of the communities has increased frustrations with the expansion of palm across the FRANJA of Guatemala, which stretches from Huehuetenango in the west to Izabal in the east. These frustrations have led communities to demand that the government begin to regulate the industry, and end the expansion. “The palm companies cannot keep expanding,” said Margarita. “They cannot continue to keep sowing, buying, and accumulating more land. We have demanded that government put in place a law that caps the amount of land used for palm, and allows for us poor farmers to have access to land.”

continued next page

## Expansion of Palm Across Guatemala

The first palm plants were brought to Guatemala in the late 1980s and have since spread like a virus across Guatemala and Central America. The expansion was strengthened especially in the years after the signing of the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which guaranteed multinational Companies with security in their investments into sectors such as palm oil.

The fruit of the palm is a high-yielding oil plant, which has gained a significant importance in the processed food industry. Palm oil production has spread because of the increased demand in the United States and Europe as vegetable oil used in a wide range of products including soaps and waxes, as well as popular food products such as Nutella, and Ben & Jerry's Chubby Hubby Ice Cream. Increasingly the production has been promoted as a renewable biofuel, which has further brought people into the industry.

The bunches of palm oil berries, commonly called *Racimos*, contain roughly 2,300 berries, and are harvested by hand. From there they are loaded onto a truck, and taken to the processing plant.

The expansion has exasperated the crisis over land that has historically plagued the region; in Guatemala, 3 percent of the population owns nearly 85 percent of arable land.

According to statistics from the Guatemalan National Bank, production of palm oil has spread by nearly 270 percent since 2006. This expansion has been partially influenced by a campaign by the Guatemalan Ministry of the Economy to attract foreign direct investment. In 2011, the 'Invest in Guatemala' campaign was launched, in which the ministry claims that "88 percent of fertile land is vacant."

But as production of palm has expanded, small farmers have been pushed further and further to the margins.

"We need the fish," said Juan Choy. "We are living without land. People are migrating to Mexico and the United States, and families are disintegrating. Where are we supposed to produce? There is no land. The cost of meat has skyrocketed, and our maize is coming from Mexico."

## Europe's offshore wind power industry has set a record for its biggest ever year just six months into 2015.

The biggest factor was a huge jump in turbines in German waters connecting to the grid, with [Germany](#) installing three times more electricity-generating capacity than the continent's current leader, the UK.

In the first half of the year, 584 offshore wind turbines were connected, adding 2.3GW of capacity to the European electricity grid, according to new data from the [European Wind Energy Association](#) (EWEA). In total there is now

10GW of connected offshore wind, enough to power about seven million homes.



The newly connected capacity is over 50% more than was connected in the whole of 2014. But the EWEA says it expects a slower growth rate in the next 12-18 months, as a new investment cycle begins and many projects already in the pipeline begin construction.

*The Guardian*, 5th August 2015

## world forests under threat



*A forest in Sumatra, Indonesia, is clear cut to make way for a palm oil plantation.*

But forests around the world are under threat from deforestation, jeopardizing these benefits. Deforestation comes in many forms, including fires, clear-cutting for agriculture, ranching and development, unsustainable logging for timber, and degradation due to climate change. This impacts people's livelihoods and threatens a wide range of plant and animal species. Some 46-58 thousand square miles of forest are lost each year—equivalent to 36 football fields every minute.

WWF April 2015

## Paris climate agreement must include global decarbonisation goal, say NGOs

By [Jon Walter](#) 15 October 2015 [Renew Economy](#)

The goal of decarbonising the global economy must be included in any agreement to come out of the Paris climate convention meeting in December, non-government groups said today ahead of final preparatory negotiations in Bonn.

## World Bank rejects energy industry notion that coal can cure poverty

World Bank's climate change envoy: 'We need to wean ourselves off coal'. The Bank has stopped funding new coal projects except in 'rare circumstances'



Smoke is emitted from chimneys at the Waigaoqiao coal-fired power plant in Pudong, Shanghai. Photograph: Imaginechina/Corbi

The World Bank said coal was no cure for global poverty on Wednesday, rejecting a main industry argument for building new fossil fuel projects in developing countries.

In a rebuff to coal, oil and gas companies, Rachel Kyte, the World Bank climate change envoy, said continued use of coal was exacting a heavy cost on some of the world's poorest countries, in local health impacts as well as climate change, which is imposing even graver consequences on the developing world.

"In general globally we need to wean ourselves off coal," Kyte told an event in Washington hosted by the New Republic and the Center for American Progress. "There is a huge social cost to coal and a huge social cost to fossil fuels ... if you want to be able to breathe clean air." Coal, oil and gas companies have pushed back against efforts to fight climate change by arguing fossil fuels are a cure to "energy poverty", which is holding back developing countries.

Peabody Energy, the world's biggest privately held coal company, went so far as to claim that coal would have prevented the spread of the Ebola virus. However, Kyte said that when it came to lifting countries out of poverty, coal was part of the problem – and not part of a broader solution.

"Do I think coal is the solution to poverty? There are more than 1 billion people today who have no access to energy," Kyte said. Hooking them up to a coal-fired grid would not on its own wreck the planet, she went on. But Kyte added: "If they all had access to coal-fired power tomorrow their respiratory illness rates would go up, etc, etc ... We need to extend access to energy to the poor and we need to do it the cleanest way possible because the social costs of coal are uncounted and damaging, just as the global emissions count is damaging as well."

*The Guardian*, 5th August 2015

## Climate Justice – Trade Deals

"It also means an end to corporate trade deals that give corporations the power to interfere with our attempts to build our local economies, to regulate corporations, to stop damaging extractive projects. Under these trade rules, provinces and states that have banned fracking are facing trade challenges. Germany is facing huge trade challenge for its energy transition, it is being sued by a private company that says this transition — that we all need to embrace — is standing in the way of its right to earn profit from coal and nuclear"

**Naomi Klein**

## Guatemala: UN says corporate positioning of river 'ecocide'

The United Nations said 23 species of fish and 21 species of birds, reptiles and mammals in Guatemala's Pasion River have been affected by contamination caused by industrial African oil palm production, TeleSUR English said. The UN expressed concern on July 21 about serious contamination of the river and the risks the environmental damage poses to thousands of families. The Pasion River was declared an ecological disaster after it was severely contaminated by an industrial pesticide used for the production of African oil palm, a chemically intensive crop grown as a monoculture.

"The main impact is water pollution, because these people live off the river, use the water for drinking and for personal hygiene, as well as feeding themselves with the fish," said the UN coordinator in Guatemala, Valerie Julliard. The extent of damage to the river started to come to light in June, when thousands of dead fish surfaced in northern Guatemala near the border with Mexico, leading authorities to investigate what they called an "ecocide".

*Green Left Weekly*, 7 July 2015

## Getting down and dirty on Direct Action

Peter Hannam *News Review SMH* 13 Nov. 2015  
Governments accept the climate science, which is why about 200 of them will gather this month in Paris to ink a new global treaty to curb emissions that have sent atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to their highest in at least a million years – at a rate NASA says probably hasn't been seen in 25 million years.

Power sector emissions are rising, nullifying some of the Direct Action carbon abatement.

Australia's emissions are equivalent to about 543 million CO<sub>2</sub> tonnes a year. The Abbott government promised to cut them 5 per cent on 2000 levels by 2020 and about 19 per cent by 2030, and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has retained those targets. Cumulative cuts amount to about 2.5 billion tonnes between now and 2030, a figure [The Climate Institute](#) says is about half Australia's fair share.



# “it’s an angry beast that we’ve awoken”

The following story reminds one of *The Kraken Wakes*, an apocalyptic science fiction novel by John Wyndham, which was published in 1953, Kraken is a sea monster from Scandinavian folklore.

**An angry beast awakes** was the address by Clive Hamilton at the 2014 Sydney Writers Festival. The beast, if you believe it to be a beast, is Planet Earth. Another angry beast is the sleeping dragon. Editor;

**Twisting the Dragon’s tail**. Aboriginal Legends say there’s a world beneath this one where a dragon lies sleeping. They say be careful how you wake the dragon. The year 2015 marks the seventieth anniversary of the most profound change in the history of human enterprise on Earth: the unleashing of the elemental force within uranium, the explosion of an atomic bomb, the unleashing of the dragon.

## Forget ‘saving the Earth’ – it’s an angry beast that we’ve awoken

May 27, Clive Hamilton



Extreme fire is part of life in places like San Diego, USA, pictured earlier this month. But local fire captain Richard Cordova says it’s “very odd for the month of May to have these types of fires”

Michael Nelson/EPA

Environmentalism is undergoing a radical transformation. New science has shown how long-held notions about trying to “save the planet” and preserve the life we have today no longer apply.

Instead, a growing chorus of senior scientists refer to the Earth with metaphors such as “the wakened giant” and “the ornery beast”, a planet that is “fighting back” and seeking “revenge”, and a new era of “[angry summers](#)” and “death spirals”.

Whether you consider yourself to be an environmentalist or not, the warnings from Earth system science have far-reaching implications for us all. Nature fights back

In its early days, the science of ecology showed how easily complex ecosystems could be degraded and species obliterated. In 1962, by observing the damage to humans and nature caused by factories and industrial agriculture, Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* presented nature as highly vulnerable to destruction by the power of synthetic chemicals.

The early view of nature as fragile, that is, easily disrupted and unable to repair itself, has been tempered

somewhat by evidence that many ecosystems are more resilient and can adapt to new circumstances.

But whether fragile or robust, the Earth has been understood as unresponsive, neutral and essentially benign. This understanding has various expressions, including “Mother Earth” as nurturing, feminine and easily damaged entity. The notion of living harmoniously with nature took hold, inspired by images of pre-industrial peoples living close to the natural world.

Underlying these conceptions is a view that, while humans can cause a great deal of damage, nature is passive and always our victim.

Yet now we see that the planet has been disturbed from its resting state, jolted out of the providential era of climatic stability characteristic of the last 10,000 years, and is now on a new and largely uncontrollable path that is creating conditions dangerous for human life.

Seeing the bigger picture:

The rise of Earth system science – which has brought together many different fields of science so that we can better understand how the Earth’s atmosphere, oceans, land and other systems work together – has changed the way we see the world.

Now, the Earth is understood as a dynamic system with strong feedback effects, which can suddenly shift it to a new state when critical points are crossed. So profound has been the influence of humans that scientists have proposed that the Earth has entered a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene or the Age of Humans, defined by the fact that the “human imprint on the global environment has now become so large and active that it rivals some of the great forces of Nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth system”.

\_\_\_\_\_ As Earth scientist James Syvitski writes: *At some point, we graduated from adapting to our environment to making it adapt to us ... But now we regularly decelerate and accelerate natural processes, focus energy in extraordinary ways and alter, destroy or create ecosystems.*

That means we must no longer see the Earth as the submissive repository for supplying our resources or taking our wastes, nor as the docile victim of our rapacity or carelessness.

This newer understanding of the Earth has been vividly expressed by palaeoclimatologist Wally Broecker: *The palaeoclimate record shouts out to us that, far from being self-stabilizing, the Earth’s climate system is an ornery beast which overreacts even to small nudges.*

When the Earth is understood this way, the task of environmentalism can no longer be to “save” or preserve the planet, for the planet we wanted to save has already become something else. Our task now is to do what we can to pacify, or at least not aggravate further, something vastly more powerful than we are.

If we have wakened the slumbering beast by poking and prodding it, the prudent course is firstly to stop. But there is no return to the peaceful conditions of the Holocene, at least not for thousands of years; but to provoke it further, as we still are, is foolishness on an epic scale  
**Respect, not love. continued next page**

Yes, the Earth still demands our respect, but it is a respect founded on trepidation rather than love. If we are inclined to think of the planet as [Gaia](#), we would do better to regard it not as the all-loving, all-nurturing Mother Earth of the romantics, but more like the half-crazed, bloodthirsty and vindictive goddess of the original Greek tales.

Some like French philosopher Michel Serres have argued we must negotiate a new contract with nature. Under the terms of this natural contract humanity would reject mastery “in favour of admiring attention, reciprocity, contemplation, and respect”. The contract would grant nature rights and make reparations.

Twenty years ago, that kind of thinking seemed to make sense. But today we must ask whether the Earth, roused from its slumber, is in any mood to sign a contract with us. Earth system science now teaches us that the planet to which we might have hoped to graciously offer a peace deal – the receptive, predictable object of our exploitation and neglect – existed only in our imaginations.

The Earth does not want our love. Instead of talking restitution, would we perhaps be wiser to be preparing for retribution?

May 27, 2014 *The Conversation*

## Energy Democracy

**“What it means is that, wherever possible, communities could collectively control renewable energy they are generating . They could control democratically and keep their profits in the community to pay for services,”**

Naomi Klein

## Australian fossil fuel subsidies put at \$5.6bn a year in new report

Sophie Vorrath      Renew Economy 12 November 2015

As Malcolm Turnbull heads to Turkey to attend this weekend’s G20 Summit in Antalya, a new international report has revealed that Australia is still subsidising fossil fuel production to the tune of a massive \$A5.6 billion a year.

The report, ‘Empty promises: G20 subsidies to oil, gas and coal production’, also highlights how Australian companies have received billions of dollars from other G20 governments to develop liquefied natural gas sites.

And it notes that Australia also funds the industry with a further \$A292 million (\$US262 million) a year in public finance, as it expands fossil fuel production on multiple fronts.

## James Hansen predicts higher sea level rise

Kathy Fairfax



A new study shows that Greenland and Antarctic glaciers will melt ten times faster than previously thought, leading to an even greater increase in sea levels.

World famous climate scientist James Hansen, known as the “father of global warming” for being the first to see the threat of catastrophic climate change in 1988, has issued a new warning. Sea level changes are likely to be much higher, less stable and happen much sooner than previous predictions. The warnings are contained in a new study published in the European Geophysical Union’s open-access journal *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*.

The study, written by Hansen, NASA’s former lead climate scientist, and 16 co-authors — many of whom are considered the top in their fields — concludes that glaciers in Greenland and Antarctica will melt ten-times faster than previous consensus estimates, resulting in a sea level rise of at least three metres in as little as 50 years. A sea level rise of three metres would inundate most Australian coastal cities and other cities around the world, from New York to Shanghai. The prospect that every coastal city on the planet may be uninhabitable in a few decades requires, in the study’s authors’ view, “emergency cooperation among nations”. “We conclude that continued high emissions will make multi-metre sea level rise practically unavoidable and likely to occur this century. Social disruption and economic consequences of such large sea level rise could be devastating. It is not difficult to imagine that conflicts arising from forced migrations and economic collapse might make the planet ungovernable, threatening the fabric of civilisation.”

Hansen and his colleagues analysed how an influx of cold freshwater from the planet’s melting ice sheets will disrupt the ocean’s circulation — a factor they say has not been fully explored in the scientific literature to date. In addition to running climate models, they compared modern warming to similar temperature increases from about 120,000 years ago, when sea level was 5 to 9 metres higher than it is today due to the release of glacial water. They concluded the influx of freshwater from melting ice sheets in modern times would essentially shut down the ocean’s circulation, causing cool water to stay in the Earth’s polar regions and equatorial water to warm up even faster. **continued next page**

# Climate change points to capitalism's failure

John Rainford

Despite the overwhelming evidence, Tony Abbott does not believe that climate change is real.

The Climate Council recommended a reduction of 45% to 65% of Australia's 2005 carbon emission levels as the minimum that would be required to prevent runaway climate change.

Yet the government's response was to set a target of reducing emissions by 26% to 28% of 2005 levels by 2030 — a recipe for climate change disaster even if it could be achieved under present government policy — which it cannot.

Labor and the Greens are equally off the mark in thinking that the market can solve climate change with an emissions trading scheme. As Naomi Klein has pointed out, "the prospect of getting paid real money based on projections of how much of an invisible substance is kept out of the air tends to be something of a scam magnet."

As the evidence of climate change being already underway accumulates, so too is it ignored or denied by Australia's mainstream political parties.

The latest evidence came last week from the US weather agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

It reported that average global temperatures were the highest in 136 years in the month of July. The globally average sea surface temperature was 0.75°C above the 20th-century average.

This is the highest temperature for any month in the period from 1880 onwards. The previous highest record was in July last year, something of an alarming trend to even the most casual observer.

Jake Crouch, a climate scientist at NOAA was reported as saying that the latest scientific finding, "just reaffirms what we already know: that the Earth is warming. The warming is accelerating and we are really seeing it this year".

Globally, the combined sea and land temperature in July was 16.61°C, which is 0.81°C above the 20th century average of 15.8°C.

Professor Will Stefen from the Australian Climate Council noted that records were being broken as the reality of a warming world set in.

With this year expected by climate forecasters to be an El Nino year, Professor Stefen said that "the presence of a powerful El Nino that could break records increases the likelihood of another angry Australian summer".

Capitalism is a boom and bust system that the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter made a virtue of with his notion of "creative destruction". It is also based on the long implausible proposition of infinite growth from finite resources.

The evidence of capitalism's failure is abundantly clear — the four-fold increase in manufacturing output in the two decades from 1950 came with a tripling of carbon dioxide emissions

*Green Left Weekly* 22 Sept. 2015

The study found this temperature gradient would generate more intense storms around the tropics and accelerate melting at the poles by so much that the melt could double in just a decade. "The cooling mechanism is cut off, so it's melting ice shelves," Hansen explained in an interview with Grist. "It's a really dangerous situation where you get melting that causes more melting."

Hansen also said that in the past, temperature increases of 1°C have resulted in higher sea levels than we have projected to accompany that temperature rise in the future. The study rejects the presumption that only global warming in excess of 2°C represents a threat to life on the planet. So far, we have already warmed about 0.8°C, and even if we stopped emitting all greenhouse gases tomorrow, there are still several decades of warming to come from our recent emissions.

Meanwhile, as global emissions keep rising, some scientists say that even 2°C is an unrealistic goal because the global community simply is not reducing emissions enough to get there.

Yet Hansen's study suggests that 2°C is too unambitious, and that the point at which warming becomes exponential instead of linear is more like 1.5°C. Other scientists have reached similar conclusions recently, such as those behind a [United Nations report](#) released in May that looked at the effect of sea level rise on Pacific island nations.

At a press conference to publicise the study, Hansen framed his findings as a plea to world leaders to pursue a new 1.5°C target: "I wanted to publish now, so the information is available well before the Paris meetings," he said, referring to the next round of climate talks due in December. He said he will spend the next few months educating delegates on the study.

"Politicians need to understand that the issue is more urgent than previously realised," Hansen said. If warming reaches 2°C, "we will hand young people a climate system in which it is impossible to avoid large sea level rise."

The study should serve as a sobering wake-up call to all those, like (ex) Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who still dispute the threat posed by our ongoing burning of fossil fuels.

Reproduced from *Green Left Weekly* August 18, 2015

## BP's proposal to mine The Bight

Mirroring traditional owner and whale songman Bunna Lawrie said he could "not allow BP to mine oil in the Great Australian Bight", pointing to the potential poisoning of sea and land by any oil spill.

"The Great Australian Bight is the greatest whale nursery on this planet," Mr Lawrie said. "You will never find another great whale story like this that we have in the Great Australian Bight. The ocean and the earth sustain all living life. If we let BP go and then destroy that, all that is dead, destroyed, will never return."

Angela Macdonald-Smith *Business Day, SMH* Oct.15 2015

## Turnbull on climate: Abbott with better manners

Simon Butler

**In his first day as the new prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull ruled out any change to his predecessor Tony Abbott's climate policies.**

When he announced his bid to unseat Tony Abbott as Liberal Party leader Malcolm Turnbull promised a “new style of leadership”. The problem is that is about all we can hope for from the new prime minister: a change in style but not in substance.

In his first day as the new PM, Turnbull ruled out any change to his predecessor's climate policies. That means a refusal to improve Australia's tiny emissions cut pledge at the UN climate talks in Paris later this year. It means Abbott's Direct Action scheme will stay, despite a report last month that showed it will force only 30 of the nation's 150 worst polluters to cut emissions at all. Of the top 20 polluters, all will be allowed to increase emissions under Direct Action. It also means no change to federal government support for coal and coal seam gas extraction. Under Turnbull, prime farmland will still be dug up for coal mines. Public health will still be sacrificed for toxic gas wells. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park will still be dredged to make way for coal exports.

Nor will there likely be any substantial change to the monstrous \$41 billion in public subsidies the fossil fuel industry will be handed this year. Maddeningly, it would be cheaper for the government to instead fully fund the Beyond Zero Emissions plan to convert Australia's energy to 100% renewables in a decade at about \$37 billion a year.

So Turnbull will not stray from Abbott's climate agenda, but he does intend to sell it far less crudely. Goodbye to the oafish claims that “coal is good for humanity” and the revolting jokes about Pacific Island nations being swamped by rising seas. Look forward to guarantees of gradual, market-led change sometime far off in the future and, perhaps, cultivated murmurs of regret that low-lying islands face such a troubling future.

Whatever Turnbull's personal preferences might be, there is little prospect of genuine climate action under his prime ministership — .....

In Naomi Klein's book *This Changes Everything* she calls for building a “movement of movements” around climate change, which can bring together all those that will be worst affected by climate chaos: farmers, indigenous groups, trade unionists, environmentalists, religious faiths and others.

But Klein's most important contribution to the climate debate has been about what this “movement of movements” should aim for. Her conclusion, that climate change means we must change everything, draws attention to the fact that our present system is not just wrecking nature. Rather, as Klein said in her Sydney talk: “this economic system is failing the vast majority of people on this planet, with or without climate change.....

Severely abridged from *Green Left Weekly* September 22, 2015

## The scariest part of climate change isn't what we know, but what we don't

August 3, 2015 AEST The Conversation

We know a lot about what climate change will do, but ‘when’ is a tougher question. Nick Kim

We now know, for instance, that even brief episodes of temperatures above 42C kill flying foxes in their thousands. An especially strong month-long heat wave in 2005 evidently drove the iconic white lemuroid possum, a high-elevation specialist in tropical Queensland, right to the brink of extinction.



The white lemuroid possum Mike Trenerry

### Things we know we don't know

Of course, there are plenty of things we don't know about future climate change. How much higher will CO<sub>2</sub> levels climb? How much warmer will it get? How far will sea levels rise?

These are just a sampling of things we know we don't know. Another biggie is this: how will climate change affect the enormous stores of carbon held in the world's forests? This question has generated a giant scientific bun-fight, with some researchers believing that rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels will fertilize plants (which use CO<sub>2</sub> for photosynthesis) and thereby increase forest carbon storage—sucking up a fraction of the CO<sub>2</sub> that we're presently spewing into the atmosphere.

Others, however, believe that rising temperatures will cause plants (which essentially behave like cold-blooded animals) to crank up their metabolic rates. This means they'll have to burn more energy just to stay alive and hence will have less energy for growth. As a result, forests will gradually shrink over time—and the carbon they lose would worsen, rather than slow, global warming.