



# Castlecrag Conservation Society Inc

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

**Newsletter No 102 CONSERVATION UP- DATE**  
**May 2016**

**Next Meeting Wednesday 25 May 2016**

**Glenaeon School Hall, 121 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag**

**8 pm**

**Annual General Meeting and election of office bearers for 2016**

**to be followed by**

## **A CELEBRATION OF LIVING IN CASTLECRAIG**

If you lived in Castlecrag for 30-40 years bring along your photos etc and reasons why you liked living here. Be brief and concise.

Castlecrag is unique in Willoughby in its foreshores, bushland and community spirit. Family and friends are all welcome. Supper will follow.



View from the Northern Escarpment of Sugarloaf Bay and up to Castle Cove



Waterfall, Sugarloaf Creek

**Membership & Finance** Annual Subscriptions are due before the AGM. Please pay cash at the meeting, post a cheque or transfer your sub electronically to our treasurer, Diana Jones, PO Box 4230, Castlecrag 2068 (The newsletter will be sent by email. If you need a hard copy you can pick it up at the AGM. Due to increased costs mailing our newsletter it is necessary to raise our fees. So a notice of motion to increase our membership fees to \$15/\$5 concession in 2017 will be put at our AGM.

**Inside:** Q & S, CCS Committee decisions; Vale Bill Donnelly; a note on climate change, p2; Editorial, CCS letter on Council amalgamation, p3; Budget A Disaster, Warning - communities heritage & environment at risk, Haven Amphitheatre p.4 Take action to confront polluters, No forced Council amalgamations p 5; NSW Biodiversity Act, p 6: Where to after successful climate marches; p 7: CSIRO cools on climate change, Things are gonna to change p 8: AGL, Big Climate Polluter, Broken Hill children affected by pollution, p 9; The Warming Planet, Returning to Earth, p9: Mountain plants can't climb higher p 10; Giving nature back., Giving nature back the value it deserves, Socialism & climate change, Greg Hunt has done it again, Poisoned Planet, p11; Mining's toxic legacy, Hazlewood mine faces charges, The biggest banks into fossil fuels p12.

## 2 Quotes & Savings

### The jewel in the Crown

National parks and other protected areas are the jewels in Australia's conservation crown. These areas have many critical environmental, economic and social benefits.

NPA journal Nature Spring 2013

### The Flood To Come

...Whatever its cause, the Genesis Flood has a basis in history for in the Bible Lands and elsewhere such events have taken place again and again. Those who take thought for tomorrow fear that, in this era of climate change, a similar disaster will soon be upon us and that it may already be too late to protect ourselves against the deluge to come...

### Carbon dioxide & human activity

...Sceptics claim - and they are right - that there have been many episodes of warmth in the past that emerged without human help. They insist that the latest is no different. There they are wrong. A 2008 survey of thousands of Earth scientists found that the vast majority agreed that temperatures have risen since 1800 and that almost as many consider that human activity is involved. Experts suggest that the total output of carbon dioxide must stay below a thousand billion tons in the first half of the present century if the world has a better than even chance of limiting the temperature rise to two degrees. On present trends, that barrier will be breached in little more than a decade....

### More carbon dioxide

..A core through Spitzbergen shows the rate at which carbon was added to the atmosphere. For twenty thousand years, two billion tons of the element were added each year. That amount, impressive as its effects were, is just a tenth of what is pumped out every twelve months today. Plants and animals are again on the move and the oceans have become more acidic as the world relives that ancient crisis of long ago....

The above three quotes are from Steve Jones in his book *The Serpent's Promise*, Little Brown 2013.

### I am Wisdom, I am life

"I am that living and fiery essence of the divine substance that grows in the beauty of the fields. I shine in the water, burn in the sun and the moon and the stars... I breathe in the verdure and in the flowers, and when the waters flow like living things, it is I. I am wisdom. Mine is the blast of thundered Word by which all things were made... I am life".

Hildegard of Bingen (1098- 1180 In 'Mind and Eye' by Agnes Arbor

### 'When we fight, we win!' Huge climate victory as Obama rejects Keystone

Green Left Weekly Issue 1077 (17 Nov 2015)

Abstract: After seven years of intense public campaigning on the Keystone XL pipeline that would have bisected the United States carrying the world's dirtiest oil, US President Barack Obama denied Canadian oil company TransCanada a presidential permit for construction on November 6.

## CCS Committee

The committee met on 4 March and decided:

to give membership 12 months notice of an increase in membership fees which is needed to cover the cost of newsletter preparation and postage.

to unanimously oppose council amalgamation, noting concerns about the future of eRestore (environmental levy), maintenance of skilled staff and funding for bushland management, and Council's leadership on environmental issues.

Reports received and discussed:

Peoples March on Climate Change in November 2015.

BPN meeting on planning

CCS finances.

Baird's War on Trees (and proposed changes to protection of biodiversity legislation.).

Council amalgamation.

The Haven Amphitheatre

Griffin fountain electrical fault (being fixed by Chris Hopwood).

### Vale: Bill Donnelly

Bill passed away recently. He and his wife Margaret who predeceased him by several years, were staunch members of the Castlecrag Progress Association and the Conservation Society. They were both strong supporters of protecting and conserving our natural environment. Bill will be sadly missed but his efforts will be long remembered. Ed.

## CCS Executive & Committee 2015

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

### A note on climate change

Graham Drew (The Guardian Dec.2, 2015) reported that more than 40,000 people assembled in the Sydney Domain as part of international rallies protesting climate change. When asked in opinion polls, most Australians understood

the dire consequences of carbon emissions and global warming. Founded in 1988 the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in 2013 that limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse emissions.

IPCC analysis suggests that "only the optimistic scenario would keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius a threshold should which must not be exceeded and preferably never reached" and that means zero emissions within two or three generations, yet "CO2 emissions in 2013 exceeded 35.3 bn tonnes, compared with 23 bn tonnes in 1990."

Phillip Decamps, "Climate change must be halted, now six degrees of disaster" (Le Monde diplomatique, Nov.2015 No. 1511.

# Editorial

## ***“Pat would turn in his grave”***

Unlike many other councils, including those slated for a merger with Willoughby, our council has failed to come out strongly, gauge public opinion on and stand up to Premier Baird’s policy on forced council amalgamations, a policy for which he has no mandate. The first public meeting was called only after Mosman Council was included in the proposed merger, and that was at very short notice, with very little publicity. Nevertheless from a full council chamber only three speakers supported amalgamation. When council’s submission on the merger with Mosman was later debated in Council, one councillor who favoured amalgamation while demonstrating a complete misunderstanding of the figures, stated that councillors should be able to make a decision without listening to the squeaky voices of the community! People could be forgiven for thinking that council secretly favours amalgamation, thinking that it will come out as top dog in the new arrangement. The only councillors strongly standing up for an independent stand-alone council are Wendy Norton and Lynne Saville. Changes which are already under way, including the disbanding of some council subcommittees, attempts to disband community advisory committees, exclusion of the public from the General Manager’s briefings to councillors are a big shift away from the former openness of council and its stance of community inclusion. These changes and the diminished representation which will result from a merger (a maximum of 15 councillors for the new entity) represent a shrinking of democracy. Pat Reilly would be turning in his grave at this state of affairs in WCC. Castlecrag Conservation Society Committee is firmly opposed to council amalgamation. See our submission below.



**CASTLECRAG CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.**

**P.O. Box 4230 CASTLECRAG NSW 2068**

**Re: Willoughby, North Sydney and Mosman proposed Council merger**

**Dear Review Delegate,**

The Castlecrag Conservation Society is opposed to this proposed amalgamation.

To our minds there has been little if any evidence that this merger would suit the collective and indeed separate environmental interests of these three communities. We feel that residents are best served by the current system that has small local government areas with an adequate number of representatives ready to be the public’s voice in any debate regarding decision making that effect each of those individual Municipalities.

Current planning instruments and environmental protections, that have taken a considerable time to develop, will be lost if this proposed merger goes ahead. The intention of the proposed merger appears to be a reduction of community engagement, a lessening of representation on issues of planning and environmental protection. The voices and contributions of the people deserve to be heard. This we are sure will be reflected at the ballot boxes of the next State Election.

Our Municipality of Willoughby, not only has specific environmental protection measures, but also has an ‘Environmental Levy’, approved by the majority of residents, used to manage our natural assets. This is definitely under threat if any merger proceeds.

It is hard to comprehend how the crossover between these three separate councils can satisfy the constituents with regard to these concerns. Willoughby has Environmental Policies, Bushland Management Plans and our invaluable Community Consultative Committee on Bushland Management.

We are greatly concerned about the impacts that the 10/50 legislation has had on tree cover in this Municipality and fear that any further erosion of Environmental Protection will reduce our natural amenity even more.

Our natural assets are under greater and greater pressure as population density rises and use and access to natural public areas suffer more impacts from that use. We trust this merger will not proceed on moral, civil, cultural and social grounds.

Yours sincerely,

Terese Hayward, Secretary, Castlecrag Conservation Society

# Federal Budget a disaster for the environment

‘Climate change was not even mentioned as a word, a concept, or even an issue - despite Tuesday’s budget being apparently about growth and jobs for the future. There was no new money for climate initiatives and the only mention renewable energy got was to confirm that \$1.3 billion in funds would be stripped from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency’ said Giles Parkinson, (Renew Economy, 4/5/16).

The Climate Institute’s CEO John Connor said of the budget ‘it ignores the fact that if we do not invest in strong, effective action to reduce emissions now, it will simply cost us much more in the not too distant future’.

He noted ‘There’s no extra funding for the government’s current principal policy tool the \$2.55bn Emissions Reduction Fund now likely to be expended by the end of 2016 well before the policy review in 2017, threatening jobs and growth in the carbon farming and other emissions reduction industries.’ And ‘support for climate adaptation research is to be slashed with no new money for CSIRO or the Bureau of Meteorology to fully redress climate impact research cuts.’

‘Without a plan to end climate pollution with net zero emissions by 2050 the government doesn’t have a plan for the future let alone a plan for climate change. The budget of delay is piling up the risks of shocks to electricity prices, energy security and the jobs that depend on both,’ concluded Connor.

The Marine Conservation Society said the Federal Budget contains a mere \$8.9 million a year of new and additional funding over the next three years for the Reef. This funding is mostly drawn from the National Landcare program and is to ensure water quality (though how they will manage to do that if the Adani Carmichael mine goes ahead is anybody’s guess Ed.) The MCS noted that the \$8.9 million compares with **\$7.7 billion** a year for fossil fuel subsidies which have not been reduced in the budget. Giles Parkinson, Renew Economy. 4/5/16

Nicole Hasham SMH 4/5/16 reports that \$56 million has been set aside over four years for the marine reserves program, details of which the government is yet to announce. The budget confirms that the independent Climate Change Authority established by Labor is not funded to operate beyond 2017.

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## WARNING COMMUNITIES, HERITAGE & ENVIRONMENT AT RISK

### Protest crackdown an attack on democracy

‘The abolition of citizens’ right to protest, passed by the NSW Parliament Tuesday night, is appalling and an attack on our democracy (“[We will break these laws](#)”, SMH March 16). Clearly the legislation was introduced to remove the last remaining obstacle to coal seam gas fracking. By passing this legislation the parliamentarians have shown a total disregard for future generations and the health of this state, and a total lack of responsibility.’

Adrienne Kabos Castlecrag

‘The NSW government seems intent on protecting the environment from Knitting Nannas, high profile rugby players, and Indigenous people seeking access to their sacred sites. All so coal miners and coal seam gas operators can rape and pillage the environment without community challenge. The government should heed the words of Pope Francis, “public pressure has to be exerted in order to bring about decisive political action. Society ... must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power ... it will not be possible to control damage to the environment.” At present, however, the government is more intent on listening to the fossil fuel industry, which threatens us all with human-induced climate change, than to the concerns of its own citizens’.

Neil Ormerod, Kingsgrove

‘So the coalition government with enthusiastic support from the Nationals wants to jail farmers for seven years for trying to prevent coal seam gas mining on their land. Not a peep from Barnaby Joyce federally, just his mealy mouthed platitudes about prime agricultural land while backing the miners at every turn. Can rural Australians really look each other in the eye and still vote for the “fracking Nats”’

Lou Collier, Surry Hills

letters, SMH, March 15, 2016

## UPDATE: Haven Amphitheatre

Willoughby Council is progressing proposed plans for the Haven Amphitheatre in Castlecrag, with Council (Tuesday 29 March Council meeting) endorsing baseline works that will make the site safe and publicly accessible.

The \$163,000 worth of baseline works will include removal of the existing stage and undercroft, creek line rehabilitation and terrace steps restoration. These works will allow the Haven to be used as a low key performance space and as a passive recreation space within a bushland setting – in keeping with the original use and design of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Lucy Mahony in the 1920s. Council aims to commence works before the end of this financial year.

Council will also move forward with submitting a Development Application (DA) before 30 June for proposed plans (Option 1A) to build a new stage.

‘The preferred option considered by the community, committee and council provides for a new stage in approximately the same location as the current one, with an increased stage height designed to allow the free flow of the creek in rain and storm periods. An undercroft would include two access points to the stage, changing rooms, toilet and shower, and a storage/electrical rack room.

Further progress on the new stage proposal, beyond DA submission, is dependent on Council’s 2016/17 budget cycle and other funding options, including grants and community fundraising. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.23M, with the DA conditions allowing the stage to be used for a maximum of six performances per year due to ‘existing use’ provisions.

WCC Clair Ross 31 March 2016

# Take action to confront the polluters

April 29, 2016

From May 4 to 16 a global wave of mass community direct action will target the world's most dangerous fossil fuel projects with a clear message: keep them in the ground and speed up the transition to 100% renewable energy. 350.org is coordinating a blockade of Newcastle Port on May 7 and 8. It says: "We have never had a better chance in history to break free from fossil fuels and build a just transition to clean and renewable energy."

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"Fighting climate change requires the courage to confront polluters where they think they are most powerful. For years, communities on the front lines have led that struggle and this May we can join them."

"The world is becoming dangerously hotter by the day. Through peaceful direct action across the globe we can demonstrate to those in power that people everywhere are prepared to resist the fossil fuel industry's plans to wreck the planet."

Click [here](#) to join the Newcastle blockade.

*Green Left Weekly* May 3, 2016

# China's fossil fuel transformation places axe over controversial Shenhua coal mine in New England

Heath Aston SMH 30 March 2016

The politically toxic proposed coal mine at the centre of the election battle between Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce and Tony Windsor appears doomed after its Chinese owner outlined an accelerated transformation plan away from mining into cleaner electricity generation.

China Shenhua, which owns the contentious Shenhua-Watermark project on the NSW Liverpool Plains, has warned of plunging demand for fossil fuels and slashed its global budget for investing in new coal projects.

# No forced council amalgamations in NSW

March 19, 2016

Peter Boyle, Sydney



## Hundreds protested against government attempts to force amalgamation of almost half of the state's local councils.

Smiling NSW Liberal Premier Mike Baird is showing himself to be yet another ruthless political gangster for the billionaire class and a wide range of people are uniting in resistance to his assaults on democracy.

On March 13, contingents from all around NSW joined in protest against the state Liberal government's attempts to remove the democratic rights of local communities by forcing amalgamation of almost half of the state's local councils, reducing the number of councils from 152 to 112.

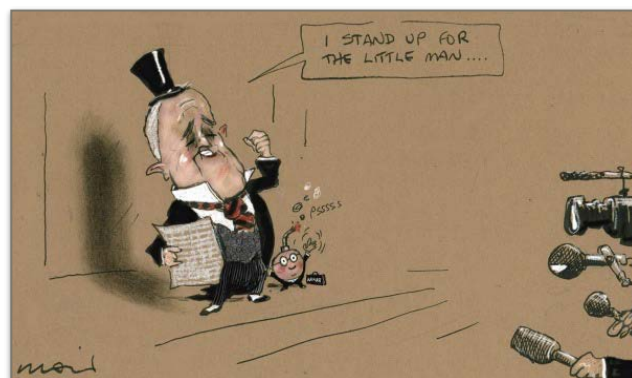
Baird may be sacking councils and installing administrators by June, if he gets his way, and the protesters were not happy. Some of their placards read "Democracy is Dead"; "Mike Baird must go"; "Bugger off Baird".

Some protesters who had come to Sydney from Tumbarumba in the state's south, wore T-shirts that said "93%". This was the percentage of people who opposed amalgamation of the shire with Tumut and Gundagai shires.

In the extremely limited public hearings for the official "consultation" on the proposed council amalgamations, the overwhelming majority of submissions opposed forced amalgamations and demanded that local residents be allowed a vote on whether the amalgamations proceed. This reflected a strong community desire to have more say and control over governments.

Some of the opposition even comes from the Liberal-National electoral heartlands and this was evident in the broad political spectrum represented on the speaking platform. There were members of the Liberal, Labor, Greens and even Shooters, Fishers and Farmers parties on the speaking platforms.

[www.greenleft.org.au](http://www.greenleft.org.au), March 22, 2016



# The problem with NSW's new draft Biodiversity Bill

February 24, 2016 John Benson *The Age*

NSW is about to get a new Biodiversity Act that, if enacted, will replace a number of hard-won pieces of environmental law. Triage and reductionist science may play a role in the new Act. Such has been the rate of species extinction on Earth over recent years due to human impacts that a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, is proposed. The World Wildlife Fund estimates as many as 100 million species may exist on Earth. If one assumes the current extinction rate is at least 0.01 per cent, this amounts to 10,000 species lost each year: thousands of times above the natural background rate. In NSW, more than 1000 species of plants and animals and 100 ecological communities (habitats) are listed,

*The EDO says*

As part of its Biodiversity legislation reform process the NSW Government has released a new *Biodiversity Conservation Bill*, a *Local Land Services Amendment Bill*, and information about proposed land clearing codes.

The proposed law and policy package is a serious retrograde step as it involves removing many of NSW's long-held environmental protections.

The legislative package is designed to replace the *Native Vegetation Act*, *Threatened Species Conservation Act*, the *Nature Conservation Trust Act* and parts of the *National Parks & Wildlife Act*.

The package will be on public exhibition for the next eight weeks, and submissions close on Tuesday 28 June

## Lower North Shore Greens issued the following statement

This morning the draft NSW Biodiversity Act was announced for public comment. This proposal constitutes the most serious threat our wildlife has faced during my lifetime.

Over the next few weeks conservation groups will provide submission guides and workshops about the draft Biodiversity Act. In the meantime I have highlighted some of the critical issues for you to be aware of below .

**Summary:** The draft Act would change the nature of NSW biodiversity protections:

- From our current *regulatory* system where the impact of development proposals is assessed (where unacceptable impacts are refused and/or challenged in court);
- To an *offset* based system where developments are approved so long as funds are paid to protect and restore biodiversity elsewhere (with no effective refusal or challenge in court)

The draft Act would remove virtually all legal avenues for the public to effectively oppose developments which harm our endangered wildlife. Illegal direct action would become the only effective avenue for community to oppose unacceptable impacts on our natural heritage.

**Reduced scale:** The draft Act has lower objectives than the current acts. Its stated objectives are to maintain (not restore) biodiversity and to 'facilitate sustainable development'.

The scale for biodiversity conservation is broadened from local to *bioregional & state* only. So while existing declarations for endangered populations remain it would be difficult to list any in the future.

The draft Act provides for *continued habitat loss* with the scale and rate of loss managed through offsetting. Developments will no longer need to consider indirect impacts such as climate impact, pollution, introduction of pests or other indirect impacts on endangered biodiversity (6.3). Instead a payment will be made to secure a future offset for direct (clearing) impacts only.

**Ending legal appeals (Ministerial power):** The draft Act removes almost all grounds for appealing developments in court, and gives almost unlimited discretionary power to the Minister for Environment.

There will no longer be avenues for appeal when environmental assessments ignore endangered species, and no avenues for appeal against the merits of proposals. Conversely the draft Act provides numerous appeal rights for those doing the wrong thing: for illegal clearing, failure to meet conservation offset actions (8.23) or if you are refused a licence to harm a protected species (2.16).

The Minister for the Environment can determine developments as they see fit and in the unlikely event the Minister refuses a proposal the developer can submit it to the Premier to resolve (quoting the act) '*as the premier thinks fit*' (5.17)

**Corruption risk:** The ICAC has strongly criticised the proposal for broad Ministerial powers noted above. The new Act goes further and allows for those regulating development offsets to *personally invest in the same offsets they approve* (6.6).[!!!!] This obviously provides extremely high risks of mismanagement and corruption.

**Public information about offsets:** The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) can choose to restrict any information they choose from the public register of offsets (s 9.10) making public oversight of the scheme impossible.[!!!!] OEH already restricts data on BioBanking, making it impossible to see where funds for development offsets go – an alarming situation.

There would no longer be a requirement to publicly list submissions lodged against a development (9.3 pt2) and developers could choose to 'summarize' ecological assessments for public consultation *as they see fit*, rather than publicly exhibit the full assessment (9.2 part 4)

**Offsets not like-for-like:** the draft Act repeatedly claims that offsets will be made for the same species or community which is lost by clearing. In reality the Act details allows offsets to be for a different species or vegetation communities so long as they are considered more threatened.

**Misusing bequests & covenants:** Some landowners have made the ultimate gift and covenanted their bushland property to conserve it forever after they are gone. Many landowners have done this explicitly to ensure their property is not used to justify or offset development elsewhere.

The draft Act will allow their properties to be converted from the covenant (after death or sale) and be used to offset development (technically: the existing covenants automatically become a Conservation Agreement Tier 2 and can be upgraded to a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement Tier 1).

**This is an appalling breach of trust** with the gift these landowners have made. Land gifted to the Nature Conservation Trust with restrictions would also have these restrictions removed (10.8 to 10.9)

Some covenants have also been forcibly created under

**continued next page**

compliance (i.e. as offsets for illegal clearing) - these could now be cashed in by their owners, rewarding illegal activity and justifying even more land-clearing.

**Offsets not to be protected in perpetuity:** Offset sites are not in perpetuity but can be cleared by simply 'offsetting the offset'. [!!!!] Mining rights and mining prospecting override offset sites and their landowners (5.18) and the landowner is not entitled to compensation for the lost biodiversity payments (5.18 pt 8). Offset sites can be developed with consent from the Minister for Environment (s5.10 & 5.16 b) for example or for 'a purpose of special significance to the state' (5.16 c)

**No need to have offsets available:** Development can proceed by payment into a Biodiversity Conservation Fund even if offsets are not available. Shortages of offsets are likely to be frequent - a current example is the Badgerys Creek Airport development which refuses to pay landowners enough to secure offsets for endangered *Marsdenia viridiflora*, so will instead fund other actions to 'assist' the species. For example offsets could be research and 'education' (3 b) rather than conservation of habitat.

For the brave you can read all the documents at [www.landmanagement.nsw.gov.au](http://www.landmanagement.nsw.gov.au)

Please consider this new threat to our environment and get in touch with our wonderful NGOs as they develop submission guidelines on these matters.

Feel free to distribute this summary (without my name) and get the discussion started

And most of all keep up the great work in conserving our natural heritage—

[Anonymous ecologist who would perhaps lose his job if his identity were exposed]

## Where to after the successful climate marches?

**Terese Hayward, secretary of Castlecrag Conservation Society said that the Peoples March on 29 November was a great day with very good weather and a great crowd of people. In Sydney about 50,000 people marched from the Domain to Circular Quay. Speakers included Tm Flannery and Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore.**

**We reproduce an article 'Where to next ?**

**December 4, 2015 Ben Courtice & Pip Hinman**



**The anti-nuclear contingent at the People's Climate March in Sydney.**

More than 2000 People's Climate Marches were held over the weekend of November 27 to 29. In Australia more than 140,000 people took to the streets to show they care, passionately, about

climate change. They are also angry at government inaction, as illustrated by the many homemade placards and props.

These marches were the biggest national anti-government mobilisations for many years. The Melbourne march — a huge 60,000 people — was the biggest street march there since the anti-Work Choices protests of 2005.

Last year's March in March was comparable, with around 100,000 people taking to the streets against the Tony Abbott government. The previous most significant climate change rally was in November 2013, when GetUp! mobilised 60,000 people less than three months after the Abbot government's election. Given the lack of such mass actions recently in the climate change movement, these numbers show that the major parties' climate inaction is generating a lot of anger and propelling people into action. More aware.

Australia is also experiencing temperature extremes, accompanied by bushfires, droughts and storms, which serve as constant reminders of climate scientists' warnings.

Most people believe the experts and find it hard to reconcile government inaction. More and more people now see the symbiotic relationship between the two major parties and fossil fuel corporations.

As the movements against unconventional gas — "fracking" — and coal have grown in strength, so too has a recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must also have the right to refuse mining and exploration on their land.

We need more such rallies with clear, unifying demands. The People's Climate Marches called for 100% renewables, but did not articulate some of the obvious steps to get there — like cutting fossil fuel subsidies and leaving fossil fuels in the ground. This allowed a very small pro-nuclear contingent to join the Sydney march, posing nuclear as a legitimate alternative energy. All 10 were heckled.

By having two demands around fossil fuels, we would have amplified the Pacific Island state of Kiribati's well-publicised demands. We would have connected with all the other low-lying communities facing the destruction of their lands.

We need to frame the discussion more around "How do we get there?" rather than just "What we want".

What next?

The People's Climate March was fundamentally an alliance between large NGOs, such as GetUp!, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and AVAAZ. They have their political differences and limitations but collectively they put in welcome resources — money and personnel — to organise the marches in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney.

ACF, the main march organiser in Melbourne, has committed to mobilising with grassroots groups in the community following the march. But if this just means a narrow focus on marginal seat door-knocking, an opportunity to build a potent climate movement will be lost. Marginal seats campaigns tend to be marginal campaigns. Rather than shifting public opinion overall, they are more likely to deliver a couple of extra seats to Labor or the Greens while doing little to build a stronger movement.

In Melbourne, the organisers involved the grassroots network Victorian Climate Action Network (VCAN). But the "grassroots" we need to bring together is vast and diverse, including Aboriginal movements and campaigns, Lock the Gate, campaigners and others not represented by VCAN.

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Grand coalitions, such as the People's Climate March organisers or Climate Action Network Australia, are not adequate for this. To build a stronger climate movement, we need initiatives from grassroots campaigns to build the campaigns and begin to link them together. Help from large NGOs is welcome to facilitate, but not direct, this process.

In Melbourne, a coalition of activists calling themselves Flood the System, is planning non-violent direct action to push the movement forward, from the end of the climate summit. It is important that this strand of the movement is welcomed and incorporated. We need to use tactics that bring attention to the issues and mobilise growing numbers of people from all walks of life..

Direct action stunts and resistance to specific developments are fantastic. Big peaceful protests are good too. Lobbying, electioneering and research also have their place. But ongoing mobilising, talking to and involving people are what will grow the movement..

In Sydney, the Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy and SOS Blak Australia decided to boycott the rally after the People's Climate March organisers failed to undertake the necessary consultation.

They were also incensed, as were others, that the Nuclear for Climate Change group was marching. Given the federal government's plans to dump nuclear waste and mine uranium on traditional lands, which is also connected to forced community closures, the two groups felt salt was being rubbed into the wounds .

True solidarity, not tokenistic measures, is essential if we are to build an inclusive movement.

Inversely, despite many unions becoming official sponsors, their contingents were not very big in some cities. This is a problem — especially as the climate deniers are using scare tactics about jobs to dissuade people from rejecting the business-as-usual approach. With honourable exceptions, there is a lot of work needed to convince unions, especially those in the energy sector, to take on the climate change campaign beyond token endorsement.

On the eve of the opening of the COP21 climate summit in Paris, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull refused to agree to a mild statement on phasing out “inefficient” public subsidies being given to the dirty fossil fuel industries — totalling \$695 billion last year according to the International Energy Agency. No surprises there. But it is a reminder that the climate justice movement has to become a lot more potent — and quickly — if it will have any hope of keeping warming below 1.5°C, as the Pacific Island communities are insisting.

## **CSIRO Cools on Climate Science**

**Ian Lowe, Emeritus Professor of Science, Technology and Society, Griffith University**

It is always disappointing when science is cut back, especially when we need to be more innovative to overcome the economic problem of falling commodity prices. It is particularly bad when the cuts are in such areas as Oceans & Atmosphere, Land & Water and Manufacturing, as these are critical to our chances of a sustainable future.

More worrying than the cuts is the language used by the new chief executive. There won't be scientists sacked, there will

be “reductions in headcount”! And these aren't research areas, they are “business units”, headed not by top scientists but “business leaders”. The cuts are “something that we must do to renew our business”, according to the CEO. The language reveals that the government is trying to sabotage our public science body and turn it into a consulting business.

**Clive Hamilton, Professor of Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University**

CSIRO climate scientists are world-class and are researching the most decisive factor that will influence the future of the world. To slash their numbers at a time when the urgency of understanding and responding to climate change has never been greater suggests that the government does not want to hear the facts.

**Nerolie Abram, Associate Professor, ANU**

The notion that somehow the question of global climate change has been answered is ludicrous. Yes, it is now absolutely certain that the greenhouse gases we have added to the atmosphere are causing Earth's climate to warm, but that big-picture knowledge does not allow us to predict and prepare for the many ways in which climate changes are going to impact on the safety and prosperity of Australia in the future. To not invest in understanding this enormous problem will cripple this country's ability to effectively respond to the many challenges facing us as the Earth's climate continues to warm.

Climate models, including Australia's ACCESS model developed by CSIRO researchers, have undoubtedly played an important role in proving the physical theory that greenhouse gases are causing Earth's climate to warm. But one aspect where models consistently show we still have much to learn about exactly how the pieces of the climate jigsaw puzzle fit together is in their ability to accurately represent the Southern Hemisphere. Gutting Australia's capabilities in climate science will severely hinder momentum in solving this and many other unanswered questions that will directly impact Australia's future prosperity and security.

**Steve Sherwood, ARC Laureate Fellow and Director, Climate Change Research Centre, University of New South Wales**

Larry Marshall surely has a point about rejuvenating organisations and solving new challenges, but I worry about his statement that there is no further need after the Paris climate summit to understand climate change since we now know it is real. Effective action requires detailed understanding. For example, Marshall speaks of contributing to the proposed agricultural development of the Northern Territory, but we don't know for how much longer this region will still support agriculture or even human habitation as the Earth keeps warming, nor how much drying (if any) Australia's existing agricultural regions will experience. The groups that would help provide answers are the ones he says we don't need any more.

**Comments compiled with the Australian Science Media Centre.**





## Things are gonna change

April 29, 2016 Peter Boyle

The election is coming! Roll out the pork barrels! What a sickeningly familiar pattern we are witnessing as DD-Day approaches.

Last week, the Malcolm Turnbull government's front bench went into an ecstatic chorus about the \$50 billion deal to build submarines. It was said to be an investment in jobs bigger than the epic post-World War II Snowy Mountains Scheme. According to Turnbull, **about 1100 jobs will be created** in the construction phase in Adelaide and a further 1700 Australian jobs through the supply chain — all to build some more very expensive death machines.

Imagine a totally different announcement of a big public investment in something that society actually needs. Imagine if we had a government that announced a \$37 billion a year investment over the next ten years to shift to 100% renewable energy across Australia, as **proposed by Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE)**. Such an investment in our future would create many more jobs. BZE has estimated that such a shift would create up to 80,000 jobs from installation of renewable energy generation at the peak of construction, and more than 45,000 jobs in operations and maintenance that will continue for the life of the plant. If just half the manufacturing of wind turbines and heliostats is done domestically, this would create a further 30,000 jobs.

Sadly we cannot expect an announcement like this from the Coalition government or the Labor opposition. Both are trapped in a capitalist mindset that offers no decent future for most of us. But these old parties are fast being left behind by public consciousness. According to a recent survey conducted by Harvard University in the US, 51% of respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 do not support capitalism. Only 42% said they were in favour of the current economic system.

There is a big shift in thinking happening out there and things are gonna change;

Green Left Weekly, May3, 2016

## AGL is AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST CLIMATE POLLUTER

AGL wants us to believe that it is a clean and green company. Its website is full of images of shiny solar panels and wind turbines and the CEO tours the globe talking about climate action.

**In fact, it is neck deep in the dirty energy business.** Not only is AGL Australia's single largest polluter, but its carbon emissions **increased** more than 92% in 2014-2015 and the company continues to invest in the fossil fuels that are destroying our climate, communities and ecosystems.

Moiria Williams - [350.org](http://350.org) Australia March 31 2016

## Broken Hill children affected by contaminated playgrounds, researchers say

16 October 2014

The discovery of high levels of toxic dust in far western New South Wales playgrounds is a "call to arms" to protect children from illness, researchers say.

Macquarie University study discovered dust containing high levels of metals such as arsenic, lead, silver and zinc in playgrounds in Broken Hill. The study, published in the journal *Environmental Research* found more than 20 per cent of Broken Hill children under five had levels of lead in their blood higher than the national standard of 10 micrograms decilitre.

The amount of lead on children's hands after 10 minutes of play in Broken Hill playgrounds was 72 times the amount on their hands before contact with play equipment, the study found.

Macquarie University environmental science professor Mark Taylor said the substances could affect children's heart and kidney health.

"The effects are also very short term in affecting their school performance," he said.

"I think it's a call to arms, as it were, in terms that we now need to look at the situation and go 'well we can't leave it as it is'. 'The information is really clear that we need to intervene'.

"We know that Broken Hill children are being adversely impacted by these exposures through the elevated blood lead levels."

The risks associated with metal-rich airborne dusts in playgrounds had previously received little attention compared to lead exposures in home environments, Prof Taylor said.

Arsenic and cadmium had not received much attention in terms of how they affected health, he said.

Broken Hill has a population of more than 19,000 people and a history of mining metals including lead, zinc and silver.

A NSW Health spokesman said the Broken Hill community had long been aware of the concerns and should continue with abatement measures, including ensuring children wash their hands after play.

However, Frances Boreland from Sydney University's Broken Hill Department of Rural Health said many families could not afford to keep their children as safe as possible.

"Things like putting down clean soil in the yard, dealing with paint if it's got high lead levels and it's unstable, sealing up the gaps and cracks around cornices and ceilings and so on - that's expensive," she said.

"We've got a lot of families who are doing it tough in the town who just can't afford to do that."

**Prof Taylor said mining company Perilya had erected signs warning children to wash their hands, and the local council was also in the process of erecting warning signs.**

## Attention all readers

The articles in Conservation Up-Date do not necessarily reflect the view of the CCS Committee. They are sourced by the editor, Harold Spies, from a wide variety of journals, magazines, books, newsletters and newspapers. They are selected on the basis of their environmental content. Articles and comment from members are always welcome..

## The Warming Planet

- Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth's surface than in any preceding decade since 1850.
- Average global and ocean surface temperatures have warmed by around 0.85 degrees Celsius since 1880.
- The average sea levels have risen by 0.19 metres over the twentieth.
- Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased to levels unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years.
- The oceans have absorbed about 30 percent of the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted anthropogenic carbon dioxide, causing them to become more acidic.

IPCC 5th Assessment Report. Brian Lassing *Collection Matter! Explore*, Journal Australian Museum Winter 20110

## RETURNING TO EARTH



Like parasitic astronauts we live in extra-terrestrial cities, sucking the earth dry and giving nothing back. It's time we approach nature through the lens of connectivity and start paying attention to the health of our host, writes Tessa Fluence.

### RETURNING TO EARTH

**How many of us, living in concrete jungles /suburbs with no bushland, are in attune with nature?** As kids did we play in the bush? In our consumer society we are losing our contact with the earth. The following excerpts from *Returning to Earth* poses the problem. Ed.

Nature became a raw material, awaiting commodification and consumption. No longer seen as a gift of God, it was objectified and stripped of its living properties. Man's ability to harness, control and exploit nature was proof of how far we'd come — man was master of the world!...

~~~~~This scientific worldview of nature as a resource still lingers today. While governments might (or might not) conserve small pockets of nature for recreation, wildlife and tourism, the rest of our planet is exploited for maximum wealth and efficiency, whether livestock, agriculture or mining. It's ours for the taking....

~~~~~However we see nature today, there is no denying the majority of us experience less and less of it. Tucked away in cities, we are increasingly divorced from the processes by which the raw stuff of nature gets transformed into things we need or want. Most of us don't raise our own chickens and slaughter them for dinner, but buy plastic wrapped fillets. We don't grow our own vegetables, but periodically empty our fridges of their rotting corpses without giving a second thought to the effort they took to grow. We don't notice the misery of the pigs that made our

hamburgers, or the pollution from brown coal that keeps us plugged in. Labour is divided and outsourced as the lines of connection and responsibility between nature and us have become invisible. We have lost touch with nature...

What would happen if nature came to be seen as a giant web of connection — a network of which we are one small part? Imagine if we were to approach nature not as warts or blisters, nor as dead matter for our whim, but as something to which we are deeply interconnected. A shift in the way we view nature could be all we need to create the mutually beneficial relationship we need to coexist sustainably with our natural environment. It's time we float back to the ground reflect and reboot, and start paying attention to the health of our host.

ACF *Habitat* May14 2014

## Extreme wealth causes poverty

Jason Hickel, an anthropologist at the London School of Economics said that the UN Sustainable Development Goals were ecologically unsustainable as they mean growing the global economy by 175 times its present size. This would require the resources of 3.4 planet Earths.

The Green Left Weekly believes we need to face the up to the fact that the extreme concentration of wealth has to be recognised as a central cause of ongoing poverty of millions of people. Oxfam reminded the rich and powerful gathered in the World Economic Forum in September that by next year the richest 1% in the world **will own more than the world's poorest 99%**.

Peter Doyle *Green Left Weekly* Sept 27. 2015

## Mountain Plants Can't Climb Higher

**Many tropical mountain-top plants** won't survive global warming, even under the best-case climate scenario, according to modelling by James Cook University and Australian Tropical Herbarium researchers. "They already live on mountain tops; they have no other place to go," said lead researcher Dr Craig Costion.

The scientists looked at 19 plant species in the tropics found at least 1000 metres above sea level. Modelling of three climate change scenarios in the region, ranging from conservative to extreme, found that by 2040 the climate niche the species grow in would decline anywhere between a minimum of 17% and a maximum of 100%. By 2080, even using conservative assumptions, nearly half of the plants would not have what the scientists believe is a survivable climate. The data show that between 2040 and 2060 eight to 12 species will be at risk of extinction, and by 2080 no suitable habitat will exist within the region for 84% of the species studied under any emissions scenario.

"Our study indicates that the current climate on Queensland's mountain-tops will virtually disappear," Costion said. "What we don't know is if these plants can adapt."

The researchers looked only at endemic trees and shrubs found solely above 1000 metres and for which there were the best records. They didn't consider reasons for their presence on mountaintops apart from climate suitability.

"The 19 species represent most of the plants that are restricted to that habitat. It's highly likely they are found only there because of the climate. There are plenty of other similar soil and substrate environments at lower elevations where they could grow but the climate is unsuitable," he said.

The research has been published in *Biological Conservation*.

# Paradigm shift: Giving nature back the value it deserves

Excerpts from *Habitat* March 27, 2015: Livia Cullen

We live in a society where the economy is valued over the environment, where stock markets and finance dominate our news, and where environmental issues are often seen as on the fringe, pertinent only to the 'left'

We spend up to forty hours a week in stark tiny cubicles under fluorescent lights, drowning in technology. The spaces we live in are getting smaller and more cramped. And between work and being absorbed in our various devices, most of us spend very little time in nature.

The intellectual capacity of humans has allowed us to do incredible things – create technology that can take us to space and cure cancer. But it has also meant that we have become so far removed from our place in nature – from the fact that we are still animals living in an ecosystem – that for many, our innate connection to it is latent or broken.....

In less than a year, we've seen Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt exploit the weaknesses in our current laws to push through huge environmentally destructive projects that

## Socialism and Climate Change

Chris Warren

We have all heard about climate change, so now what? What must we do?

The answer is two-pronged:

1) change our mode of production and

2) control global population.

We need a new form of civilisation, that does not derive its growth and vitality from artificial competition and population growth. Although capitalists deny it, more is not necessarily better, growth is a use-value and can be qualitative instead of quantitative.

*Australian Socialist* Vol22 No1 2016

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## Greg Hunt has done it again - he's just reapproved Adani's dangerous Carmichael coal mine in the Galilee Basin. The project that has no finances, no social license and no consent from the Wangan & Jagalingou people.

We reckon approving another coal mine makes Greg Hunt the Worst Environment Minister Ever.

Greg Hunt has approved this mine once before, but that decision was overturned in court. Now he's come back and approved it again - even though we simply can't afford to be digging up and burning dirty old coal.

It's a really bad call. The Carmichael mine will be one of the world's biggest coal mines, if burnt it'll make it next to impossible to keep warming below 2 degrees, and will cook the Great Barrier Reef. This approval proves what we have thought all along - that this government is in it for their mates in the coal industry.

\_\_\_\_\_ To avoid dangerous global warming, 90% of Australia's coal must stay in the ground -

should never be allowed. We've seen what will be one of the world's biggest coal mines approved in Queensland's Galilee Basin, a massive coal port expansion on our World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef and a huge coal seam gas export facility on Curtis Island.....

These injustices are stirring something in the Australian people. They are reawakening our innate connection to the natural world and driving our desire to protect it. People are beginning to understand that the survival of our species and the preservation of our way of life depends on a healthy environment. That the right to a healthy environment is a fundamental human right. That it is a crude injustice for polluters to be offered more rights than people...

Nature needs our help. On top of an anti-environment government, biodiversity decline in Australia is the highest in the world and climate change, mining and other large-scale developments are putting more pressure on nature than it can take. For all of us that appreciate the natural world, who understand that a healthy natural environment is essential for a healthy society, it's time to reconnect and restart the conversation, to listen and discuss, and to agree on a shared vision for nature protection that unites all Australians, including government and business.

Recently, Pacific Island nations, led by the President of Kiribati, Anote Tong, called on world leaders to put coal exports on the agenda at COP21, and for a global moratorium on new coal mines.

Australian Youth Climate Coalition · Australia October 15, 2015

## Poisoned Planet

### Book Review

### How constant exposure to man-made chemicals is putting your life at risk

Julian Cribb

**From morning to night, we are surrounded by man-made chemicals, most of them untested, many of them toxic. It's the price we pay for convenient, cheap products. The effects on our health are just now becoming known. In this wake up call for all consumers, Julian Cribb argues that we cannot rely on governments or industry to clean up the mess: it's up to us to repair our poisoned planet.**

**We want things to be cheap, convenient and useful. Our food arrives contaminated with pesticides and wastes, wrapped in plastic made of hormone-disrupting chemicals. We bathe and dress our children in petrochemicals. Even our coffee contains miniscule traces of arsenic, cup by cup adding to the toxins accumulating in our bodies.**

Man-made chemicals are creating a silent epidemic. Our children are sicker; cancer, obesity, allergies and mental health issues are on the rise in adults; and, frighteningly, we may be less intelligent than previous generations.

A poisoned planet is the price we pay for our lifestyle, but Julian Cribb shows we have the tools to clean it up and create a healthier, safer future for us all.

'If you care about your children, read this book.' - Paul R. Ehrlich, Bing Professor of Population Studies, Stanford University.

'We have used the biosphere - air, water and soil - as a dump for toxic compounds as if somehow we can remain healthy

continued next page 11

on an unhealthy planet. It is a tragic illusion as Julian Cribb's *Poisoned Planet* so urgently warns us.' - David Suzuki, environmentalist and author.

'How could one species poison an entire planet, from the poles to the stratosphere and down to the ocean floor? In this meticulously researched yet highly readable book Julian Cribb tells us how it happened, and what we might do about it.' -

Clive Hamilton, author of *Requiem for a Species*.

## Mining's toxic legacy

**Back in the good old days there was no green tape for miners** to worry about. Dig it up, ship it out, leave the mess behind. Consider Mount Morgan, near Rockhampton in Queensland, at one time the largest goldmine in the world.

In the 100 years to 1981 it produced about 262 tonnes of gold, 37 tonnes of silver and 387,000 tonnes of copper, as well as 134 million tonnes of waste rock and overburden.

Then the price of gold fell and the price of the cyanide used to extract the gold rose, and the mine's then-operators walked away, leaving behind the old pit, flooded with billions of litres of acidic water and elevated levels of 18 elements, including lead, cobalt, cadmium, copper, manganese.

And there it has stayed – a cocktail of heavy metals in a giant bath of sulphuric acid – with minimal rehabilitation, gradually leaching pollutants.

Decades later, long stretches of the nearby Dee River remain highly toxic. And in the big wet of January 2013, when the pit overflowed, there were “impacts”, as the Queensland mines department blandly put it, for 50 kilometres downstream. That is to say, the Dee River turned bright turquoise, killing fish and other wildlife, and leaving behind a poisonous sludge on the stream bed.

### It could happen again

Of course, the Mount Morgan debacle dates back decades to the days of the corrupt conservative government of Joh Bjelke-Petersen. It couldn't happen now, could it? Miners can't still abrogate their responsibility to rehabilitate mined land?

Well, actually they can, and they do. Often. Maybe not to the same degree as at Mount Morgan, but regularly and in all Australia's states and territories. The costs of dealing with the messes left by mining companies fall on others – governments, landholders, private citizens – all the time.

A report released last month by the Queensland Auditor-General's Department estimated a potential state liability of up to \$1 billion for the clean-up of the 15,000 abandoned mines in that state alone.

And that was a very lowball estimate, according to others. “We think that \$1 billion figure is a gross underestimate. It's likely 10 or 20 times that,” says Tim Buckley, of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. Buckley, a former long-time corporate analyst, is now working his way through the balance sheets of mining companies in the energy sector, assessing their likely liabilities for mine rehabilitation against the provisions made for those clean-ups. In many cases, they come up way short....

David Brereton, the deputy director for research integration at the Sustainable Minerals Institute at the University of Queensland and a colleague of Corinne Unger, underlines the urgency of it.

“I think there will be a very large number of mines closing in Australia over the next 20 or 30 years – I don't think there's any argument about that – just because they will run out of resources.

“Collectively, I think, probably industry and government have significantly underestimated what's going to be required to really do proper closure on all of those mines.”

Clearly now is the time to get the systems in place to stop mining companies from “externalising” their costs by pushing them onto the rest of us; privatising the profits and socialising the losses.

Like all those other three-word slogans, “Cutting green tape” is simplistically appealing. Until you realise the slogan's cost could be measured in more Mount Morgans, more environmental destruction and threats to health and billions upon billions of dollars.

Severely abridged from *Mining toxic legacy* by Mike Secombe, *The Saturday Paper* May 24-30 2015

## Hazelwood coalmine owners face charge

March 19, 2016 GLW March 22, 2016

### The Morwell fire burned for 45 days in 2014.

The Victorian Environment Protection Authority is expected to file 12 air pollution charges against the Hazelwood power station operator, GDF Suez, over the Morwell coal mine fire.

The fire burned for 45 days in 2014, covering Morwell in smoke and ash. Residents were advised to leave by health authorities.

An inquiry found GDF Suez had failed to adequately prepare for the fire, which was sparked by a nearby bushfire, and that the fire probably contributed to increased deaths in the region.

GDF Suez is also facing 10 charges by Worksafe Victoria for failing to ensure the safety of employees and the community and has been fighting an attempt by the Country Fire Authority to recover \$18 million in firefighting costs. More than 7000 firefighters fought the fire.

## Australia's biggest banks pump billions into fossil fuels despite climate pledges

Australia's big four banks are continuing to finance fossil fuel projects despite embracing a 2C or better global warming target, according to figures from financial activists [Market Forces](#).

The Commonwealth, Westpac, ANZ and National Australia Bank signed off on loans totalling \$5.5bn to coal, oil, gas and liquefied natural gas projects in 2015, a figure that is higher than three of the preceding eight years.

Among the deals were eight loans for coal projects signed in Australia in 2015, with a total value of \$4bn, including for struggling Whitehaven [Coal](#), operator of the controversial Maules Creek mine. All of the projects had some financing from the big four banks, with their contributions totalling \$995m.

The guardian, February 2016