

# NVCA News



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## Break up of department undermines environmental protection in NSW

The NSW government's move to break up the Environment Department and shift responsibility for key environmental decisions to Industry and Investment NSW puts the fox in charge of the henhouse, potentially compromising the protection of the state's environment.

In coming years there are some significant environment policy decisions facing NSW, from the future of marine parks to regulation of the logging industry. Our community needs full confidence that these decisions will be taken free of undue influence from industry and with full management of corruption risks.

Sound environmental governance demands that the department responsible for promoting industry is not also in charge of its regulation. Under the former Labor government we had a taste of what happens when the close relationship between an agency and the industry it promotes, undermines effective environmental regulation.

To date, Industry and Investment NSW has comprehensively failed to keep in check the massive expansion of the coal seam gas industry across NSW, with serious impacts on local communities, the environment, water supplies and prime agricultural land.

The Premier is now personally responsible for crucial issues such as climate change and environmental regulation. Only time will tell if he and his government can deliver the strong protection needed to ensure the future for our environment.

Robyn Parker, the Member for Maitland, will take on the new role of Minister for Environment and Heritage, and Katrina Hodgkinson, Member for Burrinjuck, is Minister for Primary Industries.

A healthy, resilient environment is a key responsibility of government. We need assurance from Premier O'Farrell that our natural world, marine habitats, cities and towns will get the appropriate attention they need for a sustainable future. - *Nature Conservation Council of NSW*

## Council Matters

**Council's 'roving' ordinary meetings** continue to be well attended with delegations regarding local issues being brought to councillor's attention. The final roving meeting is to be at Nambucca Heads Entertainment Centre Thursday July 7 commencing at 5.30pm.

**Foreshore redevelopment plan for River Street, Macksville** attracted only 4 submissions including one from the NVCA. The kaffir plums and fig trees are proposed to remain and at Cr Flacks suggestion the rare Ringwood tree (*Syzygium anisata*) indigenous to only the Nambucca and Kalang Valleys will be incorporated into the planting. So far grant applications to supplement council's allocated \$100k budget have been unsuccessful. Council staff have worked hard to accommodate community concerns with a positive outcome. The revised plan is to be determined at council's June 16 meeting.

A spate of requests to **remove native trees on public land** has prompted a revision of council's tree maintenance policy so that requests for removal of trees deemed healthy by council staff be accompanied by an arborist's report to be commissioned by council at the applicant's expense. An encouraging step in the right direction.

Council heard a delegation from Prof. Mal Heron on behalf of James Cook University requesting council's support for the university's **research project to monitor the East Australian ocean currents**. A monitoring station involving a series of antenna in the dunes is proposed for along North Nambucca Beach.

The draft **Lower Nambucca Flood Study Review** prepared by consultants is to go on exhibition for 30 days. The study focused on the estuary from Watts Creek to the entrance with objectives of the study being 1) quantify and map flooding behaviour; 2) assess sensitivity of flood behaviour to shoaling conditions, closing the 'hole in the wall', influence of the Stuart Island causeway culverts and the likely impacts of climate change; 3) map flood hazards and 4) scope a future direction for flood studies on the Nambucca River and Warrell Creek floodplain area.

NSW Water Solutions have agreed to **compensate council \$50k** for not accurately identifying the full capacity of the site for the sludge lagoon at the planning stage of the Nambucca Sewerage Treatment Plant upgrade project. Council has accepted the offer of work in kind, nominating that a full performance review of the Macksville and Scotts Head Sewerage Treatment Plants be undertaken.

Council are considering options for the management of **mixed waste at the Waste Processing Facility** at Englands Road, Coffs Harbour. All options involve increased costs for waste management. Currently mixed waste

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is being land filled after processing, following legislative changes last year which meant the product produced from processed mixed waste no longer met state quality requirements and could no longer be sold for application on land. Significant upgrades will be required if the Nambucca, Bellingen and Coffs Councils as parties to the regional waste alliance, agree to proceed to process mixed waste which meets state requirements.

- *Opinions expressed in this report are those of Crs Flack and Smyth and not necessarily those of Nambucca Shire Council.*

## New Forest Activist Group

A new activist organisation concerned with Australian forests was launched this week. 'Markets for Change' (MFC) follows the European and North American pattern pioneered by organisations such as Greenpeace and the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) in spotlighting the consumer end of the supply chain.

MFC is a market-focused environmental non-government organisation founded in 2010, which investigates and exposes the companies and products driving environmental destruction, creating the impetus for retailers to adopt environmentally and socially responsible procurement policies to help create an environmentally responsible market. -<http://www.marketsforchange.org/>

## NSW solar retrospective legislation dropped

The New South Wales Government has backed down on its decision to retrospectively reduce and close the state's solar feed-in tariff system.

New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell said that the decision should return certainty to the industry, but conceded that the decision to re-instate the Scheme was due to the fact that the legislation was unlikely to be passed in the Upper House.

The Australian Solar Energy Society (AuSES) has heralded this decision as a win for the public of New South Wales, and has come as a direct result of the public campaign against the Government's decision.

However, AuSES has said that the industry remains in crisis, and that the government must urgently act to put an end to the uncertainty of the future of the New South Wales solar industry.

The Clean Energy Council has welcomed the decision to honour the level of support for more than 120,000 households that have installed solar power systems. - [www.ecogeneration.com.au](http://www.ecogeneration.com.au), June, 2011

## Fracking Hell . . . extracts from articles on <http://lockthegate.org.au/news/>

*Fracking - a controversial technology that fractures the earth to extract gas is emerging as the next environmental flashpoint. While the process is banned in France and parts of the US, Canada and South Africa, "fracking" - where sand, chemicals and millions of litres of water are blasted underground to rupture rock and release trapped gas - is beginning to happen in NSW. The technique, which is used to explore and extract "unconventional gas" or methane deposits in coal seam, shale rock and tight sand formations, has had disastrous consequences in Queensland and the US.*

*The fracking process has been blamed for depleting and contaminating groundwater and causing methane to leak up through farmland and into the water table.*

### **In the Pilliga Scrub**

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW is calling on the State and Federal governments to reject an application from Eastern Star Gas for a major coal seam gas development. Eastern Star Gas has applied for approval from the Federal government under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* to develop a massive coal seam gas field in the Pilliga Scrub, near Narrabri in northern NSW.

The application proposes a 550-well gasfield in the Pilliga state forest and conservation area. The site is completely inappropriate for development as it covers one of the most important areas for biodiversity in eastern Australia. The coal seam gas field places at risk vital habitat for threatened species, an important recharge area for the Great Artesian Basin and protected areas undergoing current wilderness assessment.

-*Nature Conservation Council of NSW, May 2011*

### **In Moree**

Seismic survey work for coal seam gas will stop in the Moree Plains Shire Council area, after Council voted unanimously to back a 60-day moratorium. The moratorium does not include the seismic surveys that Eastern Star Gas will carry out in coming weeks on two Council roads. - *ABC News, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2011*

### **In Strategic Cropping Land**

The preservation of the water quality in underground aquifers is especially important. These aquifers are a significant source of water for agriculture and there is a reasonable probability that drilling through this aquifer many thousands of times to reach the deeper coal seam will contaminate the water. And unlike a river system which flushes water readily, underground aquifers may take hundreds of years to recover (or water users will need to treat the contaminated water before applying to crops).

The irreversibility of mining and coal seam gas impacts is one of the key reasons that farmers should be given some ability to opt out of such activities on (or even near in some cases) their land.

- *Observations of an economist environmentalist, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011*

### **In Sydney**

A NSW moratorium on new mining licences has cast uncertainty over Dart Energy's plans to drill for coal seam gas in inner-city Sydney. Two months ago, the Australian manager for Dart Energy, was confident that his company

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would be drilling for coal seam gas at a waste dump in the inner-city suburb of St Peters sometime this year.

- Nicole Gooch & Wendy Bacon (*New Matilda*), 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011

### **In Gloucester**

The group behind one of the state's first court challenges to coal seam gas mining says it is concerned about the impact on the region's economy and environment.

The Environmental Defenders Office has filed a claim on behalf of the Barrington Gloucester Stroud Preservation Society. It is challenging the recent approval of AGL's project for 110 wells between Barrington Tops and Great Lakes along with water and gas pipelines and treatment facilities. The first case hearing is set for June 17.

- *ABC Newcastle*, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011

### **In Muswellbrook**

In a rare occurrence, all nine mining companies from the region were on hand to answer the public's questions and queries on what mining means for them.

The information evening followed a similar event in Singleton last week. It was designed to give the people of Muswellbrook an opportunity to give feedback to the industry. - *Brooke Lees (Muswellbrook Chronicle)* 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011

### **On the Gold Coast**

THE Gold Coast hinterland is in danger of being overrun by industrial development as mining companies ramp up coal seam gas exploration in the area say protest groups. The protesters fear the region's natural charm will be lost and vital agricultural land and water supplies poisoned if the controversial mining goes ahead.

At least three major companies hold leases over land in the majority of the Scenic Rim council area. - *Jessica Johnston (Gold Coast Bulletin)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011

~ For more facts on Coal Seam Gas go to <http://lockthegate.org.au/factsheets/index.cfm>

## **Playing politics with Marine Parks**

The NSW government's roll back of protection at Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks represents an unprecedented attack on marine protected areas.

A coalition of 47 of Australia's leading conservation groups has condemned the State government's roll back of sanctuary zones as a cynical political move and a dangerous precedent in marine reserve management nationally.

The NSW government has justified winding back protection measures at Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay on the basis that the re-zonings earlier this year were rushed through and not based on thorough community consultation.

The 47 conservation groups representing more than 190,000 community members refutes these claims as entirely unfounded. Protections for the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks were increased following extensive community consultation, including a review of almost 10,000 submissions and 70 stakeholder meetings attended by hundreds of people.

The zoning plans introduced earlier this year represent a strong balance between conservation, recreational fishing and commercial fishing needs.

Weakening sanctuary protection is out of step with the overwhelming majority of people in NSW who support marine parks as vital havens for our marine life. - *Pepe Clarke, CEO, Nature Conservation Council of NSW.*

The claim by the Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson that the re-zoning was 'rushed' and did not consider local community views - is more than misleading, it is disrespectful to the thousands of people who participated in a two year process that led to better protection of threatened species, other marine life and their habitat.

The community understands the importance of marine parks in safeguarding the long-term future of their favourite fishing and swimming locations.

A truly independent and non-political scientific review of marine parks is an essential step for informed community participation in the ongoing management of our precious marine parks.

- *Kevin Evans, Executive Officer of National Parks Association of NSW.*

## **Bolivia's mother of all laws enshrines the Rights of Nature**

LA PAZ: Bolivia is set to pass the world's first laws granting nature equal rights to humans. The Law of Mother Earth, now agreed by politicians and social groups, redefines the country's rich mineral deposits as "blessings" and is expected to bring radical new conservation and social measures to reduce pollution and control industry.

Bolivia, which was been pilloried by the US and Britain in the United Nations Climate Talks for demanding steep carbon emission cuts, will establish 11 new rights for nature. They include: the right to life and to exist; the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration; the right to pure water and clean air; the right to balance; the right not to be polluted; and the right to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered.

Controversially, it will also enshrine the right of nature "to not be affected by mega-infrastructure and development projects that affect the balance of ecosystems and the local inhabitant communities".

"It makes world history. Earth is the Mother of All", said the Vice-President, Alvaro Garcia Linera.

The law has been heavily influenced by a resurgent indigenous Andean spiritual world view, which places the environment and the earth deity known as the Pachamama at the centre of all life. Humans are considered equal to all other entities.

Bolivia has long suffered from serious environmental problems from the mining of tin, silver, gold and other raw materials.

- John Vidal, Sydney Morning Herald, April 12, 2011

## We're on Facebook!

An item which aroused much discussion (and lots of confusion) at NVCA's Planning Workshop in March, was that of a Facebook presence for NVCA. Since then we've had a Facebook workshop and a NVCA facebook GROUP has been created. This is a quick and effective way to get information out to members concerning current campaigns, upcoming events and actions, and also to share information regarding general environmental issues. We are able to load documents, inform members about events, respond to campaigns and network on various issues.

The group page is open to those who request membership. If you are a facebook user and would like to be a member, please search for NambuccaValley ConservationAssociation and the group should come up. You will see our regular facebook page and you can request to be a 'friend' on the regular facebook page, however, all updates and information will be shared via the group page.

To become a friend of NVCA go to <http://www.facebook.com/>

## and we'd like to be on 2NVR!

We have been invited to have a regular (or not so regular, if that suits best) slot on the 2NVR timetable to air some conservation issues. Is there anyone out there who already has presenter training or who would like to learn to become a presenter for NVCA (2NVR has offered tuition)? It could be as simple as reading the articles from this newsletter with some music played in between, or it could be more indepth if that is preferred. If you are interested please send an email and we'll go from there. More than one presenter would make it more enjoyable, so don't pass this up thinking someone else will do it - email us soon at [nvca@nvca.org.au](mailto:nvca@nvca.org.au)

## Bioregionalism

Bioregionalism is a movement which is gaining momentum in many Western countries. Bioregionalism is not new – it's been around for millennia. In Western countries we've moved away from the concept of bioregion to one of globalisation, but if we are to live sustainably, now is the time to return to a bioregional lifestyle.

The term 'bioregionalism' is difficult to define, as different people place different nuances on aspects of the term. In relation to organic food production and consumption the emphasis is on creating sustainable foodsheds (a term coined to define geographic areas in much the same way as a watershed defines a specific area).

Although we are not often consciously aware of it, we live in a physical, ecological, historical and cultural area that is unique – its boundaries are often ridge tops rather than administrative or other arbitrary lines on a map. In general terms bioregionalism refers to living a rooted life *ie* being aware of the ecology, economy and culture of the place where you live, and making decisions that support and enhance these aspects. We can do this by doing some or all of the following:

- Purchase locally grown organic food
- Purchase products made by socially and environmentally responsible companies with outlets close to your home
- Shop in locally owned shops rather than large chain retailers
- Know, appreciate and support your neighbours
- Bank with banks and credit unions which invest in your local community
- Reduce waste and know where that waste goes
- Know where your water comes from and use it sparingly
- Know how your electricity is produced and use alternative energy sources where possible
- Have a direct involvement in your children's education
- Know the human cultures that occupied your area in the past
- Connect to your food and the people you share meals with - *Slow Food*.

## NAMBUCCA SHIRE COUNCIL'S

### final ROVING MEETING

will be held at the  
**Nambucca  
Entertainment Centre  
on 7th July.**

Commencing at 5.30pm.

*Be there, take a friend,  
and ask lots of questions.*

## NVCA MONTHLY MEETINGS are held on the LAST FRIDAY of each month.

Meetings begin at  
**10AM.**

*For meeting venue:  
please email  
[nvca@nvca.org.au](mailto:nvca@nvca.org.au)*

*All members are very welcome  
to attend these meetings.*

## Like to help the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association Inc fund-raise at no cost to you?

Open a Community Saver Account (CSA) with the Bananacoast Community Credit Union Ltd and the BCU will donate to NVCA. Open a Community Saver Account with any amount and earn interest. The Community Saver Account is designed as an incentive savings account, not a transaction account with your savings accessible only by phone or internet.

**The BCU donates an amount  
equal to 1% of the annual  
average balance  
held in your account.**

You can directly influence how much sponsorship money is generated and it doesn't cost you anything.

As a non-profit community organisation, NVCA has been approved by our local BCU to be a recipient of these donations.

**Invest your savings  
and help the environment  
at the same time!**