



## Row over massive clear-fell 'trials' continues

Assurances by NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) that 'all is well' in the region's native forests have been rejected as "not believable, nor are they based on reality. The comments are the latest in a major public dispute over the EPA's support for proposed logging "trials" at massively increased levels of intensity.

The EPA is more interested in delivering 'lite' logging conditions to allow more intensive logging, than ensuring the protection of the environment. Current timber quotas are at unsustainable levels, way above realistically achievable volumes, as we warned governments they were in the past. By assisting the logging industry to recover these excessive volumes the EPA is weakening environmental protection rules and allowing more damage to the environment.

The EPA's plans to allow Forestry Corporation to trial logging at massively increased intensities, including large areas of clear-fell, with a view to 'locking-in' new forestry approvals for decades, have led to conflict with one of the region's major public interest environment groups, who have carried a vote of 'no confidence' in the EPA and vowed to oppose the 'trials' and further logging in the region's publicly owned native forests after current approvals expire, at the end of 2018.

The plan to intensify logging in publicly owned native forests, to facilitate the industry's and Forestry Corporation's conversion of native forests into 'plantations', for 'harvest' every 10 years for wood fibre to be burnt as renewable energy - was "an obscene policy initiative".

Anyone who understands the dangers of climate change sees this idea as sheer lunacy... It is going in entirely the wrong policy direction: not towards a low or no carbon future, to mitigate climate change impacts, but instead it will significantly increase carbon outputs via more logging, and then more burning of forest resources as 'renewable' (sic) energy.

That this 19th century approach is being enabled by NSW EPA, shows that the EPA has been 'captured' by the logging industry and has abandoned the larger "public interest" in protecting the environment and mitigating climate change to avoid disastrous impacts. The EPA had shown itself to be "part of the problem, not part of the solution" to the vexed issues of the long term management of publicly owned native forests and responding to climate change.

Recently the ABC Radio National Background Briefing program A Burning Question, revealed that millions of dollars of carbon credits could be available if native forest logging ceased. This sensible proposition, to end logging in publicly owned native forests, and realise the economic value of allowing them to recover, store ever increasing volumes of carbon as they mature, (and provide long term secure water supply, Threatened species habitat and public recreation resources) is the key to genuine "public interest" native forest policy and the protection of the environment. NEFA has no confidence the EPA or the Baird Government 'gets' this or will adroitly manage the tail-down of the native forest logging industry, in publicly owned forests at the end of the current approvals, to deliver this essential public policy outcome. - *John Corkill, spokesperson for the North East Forest Alliance.*

## Court revokes approval of Adani's Carmichael mega-mine

The Mackay Conservation Group has won its case against Indian giant Adani's controversial Carmichael coal mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin, with the Federal Court ruling today that the approval by Environment Minister Greg Hunt is invalid on environmental grounds.

The mine would have been the biggest in Australian history and the Southern Hemisphere, and among the world's largest. The case, launched by Mackay Conservation Group in January 2015, challenged Environment Minister Greg Hunt's approval of Carmichael on three grounds: that the Minister incorrectly assessed its climate impacts, ignored Adani's poor environmental record, and failed to consider conservation advice from his own Department on the impact of the mine on two vulnerable species.

In a remarkable turn of events, Minister Hunt conceded to the Court that he failed in his duty to properly assess the Carmichael mine project in accordance with his obligations under Federal environmental legislation.

"It is astonishing and deeply troubling that it has taken a legal case by a small community group to bring the approval process under proper public scrutiny, and expose Minister Hunt's dereliction of duty in fast-tracking the mine," said Ellen Roberts, Coordinator of Mackay Conservation Group.

"The scale and impacts of this mine mean it would be the most damaging in Australian history. Adani, has flouted the law and recklessly destroyed the environment in India. In Australia, Carmichael would be the driver for the huge coal port the company plans to build on the Great Barrier Reef.

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“Given that Minister Hunt also has carriage of the port approval, what faith can the community now have that he will act appropriately to protect the Reef?”

Adani's Carmichael mine would have ripped up precious habitat for threatened species and sucked billions of litres of precious ground water every year. The burning of the coal from the mine would have driven global warming at a time when science tells us coal reserves must be left in the ground. Additionally, recent revelations have thrown the company's economic and job claims into doubt.

*READ MORE* <https://www.qldconservation.org.au/2015/08/mackay-conservation-group-federal-court-revokes-approval-of-adanis-carmichael-mega-mine/>

## Commonwealth Bank has abandoned Adani!

Widely considered Adani's best chance of securing the billions of dollars it needs, the Commonwealth Bank has pulled the pin on the Carmichael mine and Abbot Point coal terminal on the Reef coast. It's now the twelfth major bank to reject the project, and leaves Adani's plans in turmoil.

Adani is on the ropes, but they are desperate to proceed at any cost. The Federal Government is shaping up to spend taxpayer money to prop up the project, the Queensland Government wants to rush the approvals, and there are three huge banks in Australia that could still become Adani's saviour.

On top of that Adani still has the support of our "coal is good for humanity" Prime Minister, is fiercely backed by the Murdoch press and has some of the most aggressive and well-connected lobbyists in the country. - [www.getup.org.au](http://www.getup.org.au)

## NSW Farmers Association changes policy, calls for fossil fuels transition

The peak NSW farm lobby group has shifted its climate change policy stance and has called on governments to back "the transition from fossil fuels".

The NSW Farmers Association ended its annual conference by voting to remove clauses in its official policy that had called for a royal commission "to explore the scientific veracity and soundness of claims that carbon is a pollutant" and to investigate "whether the activities of mankind are responsible for causing any change".

In their place, members voted to replace those calls with a recognition that primary producers "are on the front lines of seasonal variability, exacerbated by a changing climate".

NSW Farmers also approved a policy change that called on governments to back "the transition from fossil fuels such as coal and gas, towards more renewable energy sources in rural, regional and remote areas" provided there is a "net benefit to farming communities".

Farmers have stepped up their opposition to major coal mining or coal seam gas activities in NSW, particularly in wake of last week's decision by federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt to approve the \$1.7 billion Shenhua open-cut coal mine in the rich Liverpool Plains farming region of northern NSW.

Greens NSW MP and climate spokesman Jeremy Buckingham said the NSW Farmers' move was "fantastic" and was more proof that the industry and his party were aligning on key issues.

"We work together to protect land and water and for policies that facilitate successful and sustainable agriculture and regional economic development," Mr Buckingham said.

"The expansion of coal and coal seam gas directly threatens farmers and makes no sense with the global shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy that is picking up speed," he said.

Joel Fitzgibbon, Labor's shadow minister for agriculture, welcomed the resolution recognising the impact of climate change.

"Tony Abbott is becoming increasingly isolated from public opinion on the impact of climate change," Mr Fitzgibbon said. "NSW Farmers are sending a clear message that climate change is an issue the farming sector is dealing with every day."

"Despite being one of the greatest challenges to greater productivity and profitability in the agriculture sector, Tony Abbott and Barnaby Joyce couldn't even bring themselves to include changing weather patterns in the terms of reference for their agriculture white paper," he said.

A spokesman for federal Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce said the minister "also recognises climate variability, but what he has consistently said is that he does not believe a carbon tax will fix this".

- Peter Hannam, Environment Editor, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 2015

## Linc Energy: Secret report reveals toxic legacy of coal gasification trials

Hundreds of square kilometres of prime agricultural land in southeast Queensland are at risk from a cocktail of toxic chemicals and explosive gases, according to a secret State Government report.

A study commissioned by Queensland's environment department says an experimental plant operated by mining company Linc Energy at Chinchilla, west of Brisbane, is to blame and has already caused "irreversible" damage to strategic cropping land.

The department, which has launched a \$6.5 million criminal prosecution of the company, alleges Linc is responsible for "gross interference" to the health and wellbeing of former workers at the plant as well as "serious environmental harm".

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The 335-page report says gases released by Linc's activities at its underground coal gasification plant at Hopeland have caused the permanent acidification of the soil near the site.

Experts also found concentrations of hydrogen in the soil at explosive levels and abnormal amounts of methane, which they say is being artificially generated underground, over a wide area.

The region is a fertile part of the Western Darling Downs and is used to grow wheat, barley and cotton and for cattle grazing, with some organic producers.

Other documents show four departmental investigators were hospitalised with suspected gas poisoning during soil testing at the site in March. High levels of cancer-causing benzene were detected at the site afterwards.

Earlier this year the State Government imposed an "excavation exclusion zone" on 314 square kilometres around the Linc facility where landholders are banned from digging any hole deeper than two metres. It told landholders there were no immediate concerns with air and water quality in the region.

The wide-ranging investigation, by consultants Gilbert & Sutherland with help from scientists at the University of Queensland, included the examination of air, water and soil samples as well as records seized during raids by department investigators on Linc Energy's offices.

*READ MORE* <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-10/linc-energy-secret-report-reveals-toxic-chemical-risk/6681740>

## The biggest cause of global warming that nobody is talking about

Even if Prime Minister Tony Abbott hasn't come around to the idea yet, most of us would agree that if we want planet Earth to sustain life for generations to come, **we need cleaner energy**. We need cleaner energy to fuel our cars, our homes, our cities... If advances in green tech can overcome these challenges, we will have solved a big piece of the climate puzzle. But not all the big pieces...

### What about the energy we use to fuel our bodies?

Turns out, this is the biggest question of all. Adelaide University's Professor of Climate Change, Barry Brook, estimates that raising animals for human consumption is responsible for half of Australia's short-term global warming gases — that's more than the coal industry!

What makes animal agriculture so inefficient? In short, animals consume more food than they produce. Or put another way, syphoning plant protein through the bodies of animals in order to produce animal protein is like filling your car's petrol tank by throwing a bucket of fuel at it: you'll lose more than you gain and create a right mess in the process.

That doesn't even begin to address the damaging greenhouse gas emissions released from the millions upon millions of 'food' animals belching and farting all day long. It might sound comical, but these emissions account for one of Australia's leading contributors to climate change — which ironically will likely impact farmers earliest and hardest of all.

While the PM is still light years from embracing green energy for Australia's future, it seems even less likely that calls for a meat tax (to help offset meat's financial burden on the environment and public health system) will be adopted any time soon.

*READ MORE* <http://www.animalsaustralia.org/features/lets-talk-about-climate-change.php>

## New App targets feral cats

Feral cats are in the spotlight with the release of a free feral cat mapping and reporting app called FeralCatScan.

The purpose of FeralCatScan is to provide the community and land managers with a tool for real-time reporting of feral cats, any management activities undertaken, photos of impacts and most importantly, using that collective information to identify practical solutions to the feral cat problem.

The app is part of the FeralScan suite of app products and is free to download. [www.feralcatscan.org.au](http://www.feralcatscan.org.au)

## NVCA Fundraiser Planned

NVCA is planning to hold a fundraiser at the Argents Hill Hall probably in October. It's in the early stages at the moment but an Up-Market Market, the NVCA Café and a Tag-Along-Tour into the forest are planned plus a raffle with substantial prizes.

So start putting aside those items around the place which are too good to toss out but which would be appropriate for our Up-Market Market. Any items in very good saleable condition will be appreciated. We'll let you know where to deliver them closer to the event.

## NVCA News to transmute to Facebook

The committee has been discussing the idea of NVCA having a bigger/brighter presence on facebook with its own up-to-date informative page making the present newsletter redundant. If there is anyone with the skills and time to create this page and keep it relevant please email [nvca@nvca.org.au](mailto:nvca@nvca.org.au) to let us know.

Leading up to this change you'll notice some articles in this newsletter have "READ MORE" plus a link. Most of us are used to this practice on the internet by now . . . it's a way to save space and gives the reader the option of reading more or not.