



National Beyond Coal and Gas gathering

On October 24-27 people from all over Australia who are working to defend the places they love from coal and gas will come together for the national movement event *Protecting our Heritage - Embracing the future: Beyond Coal and Gas*.

Bringing together people from one end of Australia to the other, it will be a rare and important opportunity for communities to share experiences and to learn from one another.

For many rural and regional communities finding themselves in conflict with a multinational mining company can be an overwhelming and isolating experience. Unfortunately it is an experience shared by people from Gippsland to the Galilee Basin, from the Kimberley to the Coonawarra, from the Hunter Valley to the Whitsundays. Mostly, people don't choose to get involved – they just do what they can to protect their country, their home, their farm, their business or the places they love. For others involved in the community movement beyond coal and gas, the motivation is a global one. The threat of global warming looms large and the imperative to reduce greenhouse pollution is growing by the day.

Despite different motivations and different perspectives, this collection of local community groups has become a powerful social movement that is making politicians and industry sit up and listen. Over the past two years we have seen successful campaigns to protect the pristine waters of Keppel Bay from coal ports, the scrapping of Metgasco's gas drilling license at Bentley in the NSW Northern Rivers, the fracking moratorium extended in Victoria and the Kimberley, banks walking away from financing a new coal port at Abbot Point and many other wins, but sadly, there have been many losses as well, with people forced off farms, communities destroyed, river beds cracked and aquifers polluted.

All of these struggles are local, but they are also global, influenced by the dynamics of the global coal and gas markets, by environmental regulation in the US and the uptake of renewable energy in India and China.

This gathering is about joining the dots and about learning from each other. It is about building new relationships, sharing experiences (good and bad), gaining new skills and insights, new networks and new inspiration to protect the places we love, and to embrace a future beyond coal and gas.

To register for this gathering go to <http://beyondcoalandgas.org/register/>
- www.beyondcoalandgas.org

New generation returns to care for country

As a young bloke, Terrah Guymala remembers being on a mission station and seeing wildfire smoke on the horizon. He recalls the "old people" on the mission talking about the smoke haze. It was rising from their land. Their country was burning.

"Old people started getting worried," he said. "They were worried that we were going to lose the land so we came back."

In returning, the Warddeken people of the remote west Arnhem plateau reversed a trend which began after World War II when the missions, towns and cattle stations pulled the populations from their country with promises of work and education.

During their three-decade absence the vast 1.2 million hectares of orphaned Warddeken country 230 kilometres east of Darwin started burning with increasing intensity.

Without small-scale burning early in the dry season, lightning strikes ignited larger, hotter wildfires.

Even now the rainforest with its grand anbinik trees, some dating back 600 years, is a threatened ecosystem. Fire is an inevitable force in the dry season.

It will never be eradicated. So it needs to be managed.

Australia – an ecological 'Bigfoot'

WWF's new research published this month reveals the sobering news that wildlife populations around the world have declined by more than half – in just two generations. In the Indo-Pacific region – which includes us here in Australia – the picture is even worse, with a 67 per cent decline over the same period.

Published every two years, the WWF Living Planet report is the world's leading survey of the Earth's health. The report also ranks the Ecological Footprints of 152 countries and unfortunately the score for Australia isn't good – we're an Ecological 'Bigfoot'.

Australians on average have the 13th largest Ecological Footprint per capita in the world. If the rest of the world lived like we do in Australia, we'd need 3.6 of the Earth's resources every year to sustain our demands on nature.

This report isn't just doom and gloom though. It charts a pathway forward - based on real solutions that are already working around the world.

In Australia, I'm proud to say, our farming partners are leading the way. They are showing the world that reducing polluted run-off from paddocks can be good for business, jobs and our Great Barrier Reef.

Find out how many Earths you need to sustain your lifestyle – calculate your footprint. The results may shock you, but you can start to make positive changes from today.

Find out if you're an Eco Bigfoot by calculating your footprint at www.wwf.org.au
- Dermot O'Gorman, CEO,
World Wildlife Fund, Australia.

Indigenous rangers from Warddeken Land Management, supported by Bush Heritage Australia, are combining traditional knowledge with Western science to care for their country.

Terrah, a senior member of the Bordoh clan and director of Warddeken Land Management, calls it his "two tool box" approach. One virtual tool box contains traditional knowledge and land management skills, the other Western science, which includes the use of helicopters and satellite imaging. It's a combined approach to fire management which is getting results.

In 2006, 40 per cent of the Warddeken indigenous protected area burnt in the dry season – more than half of the fires occurring late in the dry season, between August and December.

Last year, 23 per cent of the land burnt with 19 per cent of the fires occurring early, between May and July.

"This is and has always been an anthropogenic landscape," says Warddeken Land Management chief executive Shaun Ansell. "People here see burning as like mowing the lawn. It's how they maintain and manage their land."

The precious patches of unspoilt forest are unique. The anbinik tree is found only on the sandstone escarpment country of western Arnhem Land and the Alligator Rivers. It is one of 200 plant and animal species found nowhere else in the world.

"This is like a garden for us. We need to look after it," Terrah says. "There's birds, mammals and reptiles. And they are all important. They connect us to the land."

But the landscape is changing and the biodiversity is being challenged. Despite its remote location, invasive species have moved in. About 200 feral pigs and 2000 buffalo are shot each year. A recent arrival is the black rat.

Ecologists like Terry Mahney from the Northern Territory government's flora and fauna division are unsure of the impact it will have on small mammals in the region, which are declining at an alarming rate.

- www.smh.com.au Bridie Smith, September 2014

Tiny beads, big problem: Plastic in your face wash!

When you think about the environmental impact of washing your face, you're probably just worried about wasting water. Unfortunately, when you're scrubbing away each morning you could also be washing the health of our oceans down your drain.

From the threat plastic shopping bags pose to marine life, to the infamous Pacific 'trash island' – we already know our oceans are choking with plastic. Much harder to see and stop from entering our waterways are plastic micro-beads.

What are micro-beads? Micro-beads are tiny pieces of plastic used in personal care products like face wash and soap to help scrub and exfoliate skin. The beads are small enough to slip through sewerage systems when they wash down the drain, heading straight into the water system.

Sherri Mason, Associate Professor of Chemistry at the State University of New York, says scientists are concerned micro-beads look like food to organisms that live in the water – meaning these micro-plastics and the toxins they absorb could make their way back into the food web.

The good news - Luckily, governments around the world are starting to realise that micro-beads are bad news for oceans, wildlife and us. Several US states have made moves to ban micro-beads in personal care products – and NSW in Australia could be next.

NSW Environment Minister Rob Stokes is calling for products with micro-beads to be banned from Australian shelves by 2016. At the launch of a report into the health of Sydney Harbour, Mr Stokes announced that the

Legal challenge to Leard Forest coal mine

In June 2014 the Maules Creek Community Council, represented by EDO NSW, sought an interim injunction in the NSW Land & Environment Court to stop Whitehaven Coal's winter clearing operations for its new open cut coal mine in the Leard State Forest in north-western NSW. The community group argues that Whitehaven's Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) of May 2014 which permitted winter clearing of the Leard Forest was unlawfully made. The original BMP of June 2013 required clearing for the mine to be undertaken outside the winter and spring months to avoid when the animals of the Leard Forest are hibernating and breeding.

Whitehaven gave an under-taking to the Court that it would halt the clearing until a decision is handed down after a full hearing on the matter. However, since the injunction hearing Whitehaven has prepared a new BMP, which may fix the legal defects of the May 2014 BMP. The new BMP seeks to clear the Leard State Forest in the spring months, when key threatened species are breeding. The new BMP impacts on the utility of the community group's legal challenge. The Court has adjourned the final hearing of the case to allow the Secretary of the Department of Planning to determine whether to approve the new BMP or not. The matter was due to go back in court on 12 September 2014, however the case has now been further adjourned until 10 October 2014.

- *EDO eBulletin*, September 2014

Freeze Extended On CSG Exploration Licence Applications

The Minister for Resources and Energy has announced an additional 12 month freeze on NSW Petroleum Exploration Licence Applications (PELAs) and Petroleum Special Prospecting Authority applications. This announcement follows the six month freeze which commenced 26 March 2014, which will now be extended to 26 September 2015.

The Minister indicated that the extended timeframe will allow the Office of Coal Seam Gas (OCSG) to complete its examination of current

government would convene an industry working group to phase out the use of micro-beads.

What you can do - Check the products you buy for micro-beads. Often the use of micro-beads is advertised – but it can also be hiding in the ingredients list.

Choose natural alternatives. Not only are micro-beads bad for the environment, they might also be damaging your skin.

Tell politicians to take action on ocean pollution! Plastic pollution in our oceans is choking our marine life to death. It's a terrible problem, but one that can be fixed. Go to www.greenpeace.org.au/action and tell NSW Premier Mike Baird to support effective plastic recycling in Australia now.

- *Greenpeace.org.au, September 2014*

Australia's climate stance savaged at UN summit

The United Nations has an awkward habit of using celebrities to give voice to its key concerns, and at the recent General Assembly the key concern was global warming and the celebrity speaker was actor Leonardo DiCaprio.

His address to the General Assembly called for drastic and immediate action to reduce carbon emissions with a voice harder to challenge than his own. "The Chief of the US Navy's Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Locklear, recently said that climate change is our single greatest security threat," said DiCaprio.

"My friends, this body – perhaps more than any other gathering in human history – now faces that difficult task. You can make history, or be vilified by it."

The speech was well given and well received, but it turned out that his prediction was not entirely correct - Australia did not have to wait for history, it was vilified for its stance on climate change on the spot.

On Sunday the Foreign Affairs Minister, Julie Bishop, told members of the Major Economies Forum at a side meeting that Australia intended to stick with its low target of 5 per cent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. This, she said, was an ambitious target, and she noted that Australia was responsible for producing only 1.5 per cent of the world's greenhouse gasses.

"I'm disappointed but not surprised with Australia," Pa Ousman Jarju, Gambia's Climate Change Minister, who represents the 54 least developed nations at UN climate talks, commented after the meeting.

"What the Foreign Minister said was as good as not coming. It's nothing ... as good as not attending."

Indeed Prime Minister Tony Abbott did not attend the meeting, though many attendees detected a reference to Australia – among a handful of notable recalcitrants – in US President Barack Obama's keynote speech.

"We can only succeed in combating climate change if we are joined in this effort by every nation – developed and developing alike. Nobody gets a pass," he said.

But it was Australia and to an extent Canada that were subject to most of the opprobrium, in part because they have already enjoyed the economic benefits of carbon emissions, in part because China is perceived to be on the brink of significant action.

One of the successes of the meeting was China's announcement for the first time ever that it would set an emissions target, aiming to reduce its emissions of carbon per unit of GDP by 45 per cent by 2020, compared with levels in 2005.

An adviser who attended a meeting of small island states that excoriated Australia's inaction on climate said the group now viewed China's commitments optimistically.

The reaction to Australia's presence could not have been more different. Tony de Brum, the Foreign Minister of the Marshall Islands, told Fairfax Media that small islands states were frustrated and baffled by Australia's

PELAs and allow the Government to further assess the application process for petroleum titles.

- *EDO eBulletin, September 2014*

NSW Biodiversity Offsets Policy for Major Projects finalised

The NSW Government has finalised the Biodiversity Offsets Policy for Major Projects. The policy will be implemented from 1 October 2014.

The NSW Government received a total of 72 submissions from a range of interested people and organisations, and a number of changes were made to the policy in response to stakeholder feedback.

Almost half of the submissions opposed the inclusion of a discounting principle based on environmental grounds and concerns that it would reduce the certainty and transparency of the policy. This principle has been removed from the policy.

There was also considerable community concern around the use of supplementary measures. The rules for supplementary measures have been amended to ensure that actions are more closely related to the entity impacted at a development site.

During the transitional implementation period, the Government will start working with relevant landowners to provide information and assistance to those seeking to receive stewardship payments for conservation of biodiversity on their land. For information on arrangements for major projects throughout the transitional implementation go to www.planning.nsw.gov.au

Court orders Steve to pay up to \$804,000 in costs for losing first trial

West Australian organic farmer, Steve Marsh, who claimed his neighbour contaminated his farm with genetically modified canola may be hit with court costs of more than \$800,000 after a landmark court decision against him.

In May, Justice Kenneth Martin of the WA Supreme Court ruled in favour of Kojonup farmer

stance, especially as they had regarded the nation as a "big brother down south" and advocated for its seat on the United Nations Security Council.

On Tuesday the Pulitzer Prize-winning climate change news website Inside Climate News published a story about the "Canada-Australia axis of carbon".

It suggested that not only were the two nations not willing to pull their weight, but that they were seeking to derail the binding agreement on emissions reductions at next year's talks in Paris that many view as the world's last best hope to prevent catastrophic climate change.

"Neither the prime ministers of Canada nor Australia will speak at the summit, and the subordinates they have sent will not be offering the kind of 'bold' new steps that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is seeking on the way to a treaty in Paris late next year," it reported.

"Instead, these two governments, with their energy-rich domains sprawling across opposite ends of the earth, will present strikingly similar defences against what much of the rest of the world is offering. And their stance is earning them opprobrium among advocates of strong and immediate action."

The online magazine Slate published a story headlined, "The Saudi Arabia of the Pacific, How Australia became the dirtiest polluter in the developed world".

It charted Australian climate politics since the last election, noting Australia's history as a leader in solar technology, the creation and then scrapping of a carbon trading scheme, the promotion of climate change sceptics to key advisory roles, the attacks on the solar industry, the scrapping of the mining tax, the failed bid to expand logging in Tasmanian wilderness.

"Let's hope that the rapacious policies of the current government represent only a temporary bout of insanity," Slate concluded.

"If the Australian people cannot recover some of their earlier regard for their environment they may find in time that their great land is no longer merely apathetic toward their residence there but openly hostile."

Whether or not the UN summit was a success is open to debate. Its organisers kept its goals vague so as to avoid failure, saying its intention was to build momentum towards next year's critical talks in Paris, when it is hoped a binding international resolution will be hammered out.

China's announcement was welcomed, as was the declaration by pension funds, insurers and asset management firms controlling \$2 trillion worth of funds that they wanted avenues for climate friendly investments.

More than a 1000 business and investors backed a World Bank campaign for emissions taxes and trading schemes like the one Australia just abandoned. Leaders reaffirmed a goal to limit climate change to 2 degrees.

More than \$US2.3 billion (\$2.6 billion) of a called-for \$US10 billion was pledged for a Green Climate Fund to help developing nations get access to clean technologies. Organisers of Sunday's march in support of action were thrilled at a turnout of between 300,000 and 400,000.

Whether it was enough to spur real action will not be known until December next year.

- www.smh.com.au/environment, September 2014

Michael Baxter, who was sued by neighbour and former friend Steve Marsh. But at that point, Justice Martin reserved his decision on costs.

Mr Marsh had claimed he lost organic certification for more than half his farm after GM canola drifted onto his land from Mr Baxter's property.

Mr Baxter argued he followed all regulations on buffer zones and notified his neighbours when he planted the GM canola.

Justice Martin dismissed both causes of action against Mr Baxter - common law negligence involving the breach of a duty to ensure there was no escape of GM material and the tort of private nuisance.

On Friday, 19th September, Justice Martin made an order lifting the usual WA Supreme Court costs scale limit because the claim by Mr Baxter was high at almost \$804,000, having been a complex case.

The next step is a costs assessment by a registrar, who will determine how much is payable.

But Mr Marsh is appealing the May judgment, the details of which have been kept under wraps, and could get a stay order so an order to pay costs can't be made until the appeal is heard, likely to be next year.

During the trial, Mr Marsh was represented pro bono by Slater and Gordon lawyers and had support from the Safe Food Foundation while Mr Baxter was supported by the Pastoralists and Graziers Association.

- www.safefoodfoundation.org

Free desktop wallpapers

Bush Heritage Australia would like to share with you some the landscapes, plants and animals that we protect together.

For a stunning wallpaper on your computer go to www.bushheritage.org.au/news/wallpapers

**The next meeting of the NVCA will be at 1pm
on Friday 14th November at the 2NVR Studios at Tewinga.**

for more information: email nvca@nvca.org.au

All members are welcome to attend.

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