



COAL MINING EXPANSION IN CQ

Central Queensland is facing over thirty (30) proposals for new or expanding coal mines and has fifty (50) currently in operation. This includes Xstrata's massive Wandoan and Rolleston mines in the Bowen Basin and the huge thermal coal mines planned for the Galilee Basin.

Conservation groups point out that the political debate in Australia concerning the risks of continuing our escalating CO₂ emissions has stalled. This has resulted in an unwillingness to take effective actions towards an economy based on clean energy sources.

The current 'fossil fuel gold-rush' is threatening our food production areas and farmers are stepping up action to 'lock the gate' and mount legal challenges to coal and gas companies taking over productive lands. This 'David and Goliath' struggle is echoed by the court case involving Friends of the Earth and Xstrata's Wandoan Coal Mine which is suggested will contribute 1.3 billion tonnes of CO₂ to the atmosphere over its 30 year life span.

Capricorn Conservation Council (CCC) spokeswoman Ms James said, "Our landscape is being dissected and the integrity of the Fitzroy River system threatened by coal mining activities and the proposed Nathan and Connors Rivers Dams, the waters for which will be for mining, not food production or water security."

CCC has long argued for the phasing out of fossil fuels and moving to an economy based on 100% renewables. "CCC opposes mining of arable food production land and areas of sensitive and threatened ecosystems such as wetlands & riverine areas, brigalow, native grasslands and semi evergreen vine thickets", said Ms James.

A key concern of CCC is that despite the ongoing problems of the Mount Morgan mine there is no requirement for companies to fill final voids, potentially leaving hundreds of abandoned pits within our river catchments.

"Locally this coal rush will add extreme pressure to the already stressed marine habitats in coastal areas with proposals for up to eight coal port terminals in the Fitzroy Delta at Balaclava Island and Port Alma, and more around the Sea Hill area of Curtis Island. Topping this is the

plan for coal barges to operate 24 hours a day from Raglan Creek to four off-shore coal loading installations for export off Hummocky Island”, said Ms James.

Sensitive marine plains and the fish habitats of the Delta will be come under heavy impacts from rails and port infrastructure. Dredging and shipping poses unknown threats to Australia’s only endemic dolphin, the recently discovered rare Australian Snubfin Dolphin which lives only in river deltas. Capricorn Coast residents, recreational users and commercial fisheries will see an enormous change to usability, viability and visual aspects of Keppel Bay if any of these plans come to fruition.

Ms James said “The destruction of farmland, natural landscapes, rivers and the impact on the waters of the Great Barrier Reef can’t be readily undone once fossil fuel extraction finally ceases. The short term economic benefits of coal mining over a few decades will leave a huge and permanent ecological debt for future generations.”

Central Queenslanders are still learning from our past mining environmental mistakes, yet we seem complacent that locally we are reaping the transient rewards of the two speed economy created by the current resource boom. We appear to be blinded by the resource boom and need to plan for a regional economy beyond coal and coal seam gas which focuses on our future food production, agricultural, conservation and social needs.

CCC urges the people of Central Queensland to join the debate about how we protect our beautiful landscapes, clean rivers and reef from the impacts of coal mining, and for individuals, corporations and government to take the challenging but necessary steps to adapt and reduce our ecological impact and move towards a renewable energy future.