

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS ON ABBOT POINT PORT EXPANSION

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Over the 15 months that the TJRyan website has existed we have followed the debates over the Abbot Point port expansion, the Galilee Basin, the Ardani Mine, the Barrier Reef, and Climate Change because these have been highly salient issues throughout the life of the TJRyan Foundation.

All these issues are inevitably and inextricably interrelated. This paper will therefore cover broader issues than simply the expansion of the coal port.

We have collected on the website statements and evidence from respected academics, from interest groups, from politicians and the press. These can be found on under our 'Policy Papers' heading on the band at the top of our Home Page <http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au> the link which leads four 'Environment' headings:

'Environment: Climate Change': <http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/cms/page.asp?ID=634>

'Environment: CSG, Coal and other Mining': <http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/cms/page.asp?ID=633>

'Environment: Great Barrier Reef': <http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/cms/page.asp?ID=633>

'Environment: Renewable energy': <http://www.tjryanfoundation.org.au/cms/page.asp?ID=635>

We also carry articles by our own TJRF Board Members and Research Associates, experts who include Professor Ian Lowe, Emeritus Professor in the School of Science at Griffith University (who chaired an Australian government advisory council that produced the first national report on the state of the environment in 1996); Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg Director of the Global Change Institute and ARC Laureate Fellow at the University of Queensland; economists Professor John Quiggin, Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow at the University of Queensland, and a member of the Board of the Federal Government's Climate Change Authority; and economist Dr Jon Stanford FSIA former lecturer at the University of Queensland. We also reproduce expert articles from sources such as *The Conversation*.

Submissions to Queensland Government on Abbot Point

On 20 August 2015 Minister Anthony Lynham released the following documents:

[Discussion Paper](#),
Draft [Environmental Impact Statement](#), and
An [online feedback form](#) for community input.

Public submissions must be sent in before 18 September 2015.

This article is intended to help people wishing to make submissions but it addresses the wider issues and does not focus on the Abbot Point port expansion directly.

The debate

The political debate seems to be dominated by slogans ('coal is good for humanity') and unsubstantiated claims in favour of the advantages of the Commonwealth and State governments encouraging and supporting the Adani Mining Company. It has been argued that the Adani Mine will bring incredible benefits to the Queensland and Australian economies and employment creation. There are few rational responses to the wealth of evidence to the contrary (including evidence from economists and environmentalists).

The debate has also descended into a misleading, destructive controversy pitching support for jobs against support for the environment (see 'Truth hurts: the science behind why people don't care about the death of our planet and democracy' <http://apo.org.au/commentary/truth-hurts-science-behind-why-people-dont-care-about-death-our-planet-and-democracy>)¹

For a discussion of the misleading arguments put forward in defence of the Adani Mine 'Adani mine a \$20b project creating 10,000 jobs? The Abbott government's myths busted' <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-opinion/adani-mine-a-20b-project-creating-10000-jobs-the-abbott-governments-myths-busted-20150819-gj2u2o.html>.²

The controversy has also descended into 'playing the man (or woman) not the ball', rather than a rational exchange of the basic evidence. In a move reminiscent of the dying days of the Newman Government in Queensland, the Abbott Government is moving to prevent environmental objections by anyone not immediately affected by mining developments. Queenslanders may remember that Campbell Newman (echoing actions by Joh Bjelke Petersen decades earlier) passed late-night legislation in the dying days of his government removing the citizens' objection rights.

Chris McGrath provided chapter and verse on this in his article in *The Conversation* in September 2014, see :

'Coal mining coup in Queensland removes public objection rights' (<https://theconversation.com/mining-coup-in-queensland-removes-public-objection-rights-31737>) or

'Move to restrict ideological objections to Qld mining projects' <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-27/move-to-limit-ideological-objections-to-qld-mining-projects/5289246>.

This clearly labels all those who object to mining developments as 'ideological'. Really? Many of the objections are profound as long term impacts on water supplies and agricultural land, to say nothing of climate change, and the far more sustainable jobs potential in the tourist industry.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott now wants to introduce the same limitations, though he is likely to be stymied in his attempt by the Senate.

This move is extraordinary on two grounds: the first is the removal of citizens' rights when few projects have actually been rejected; the second is that coal mining and the Great Barrier Reef affect everyone. There is ample evidence that coal mining is a declining industry, that it is harmful to the environment, and may destroy one of the precious assets that we should be handing on to future generations. In addition, our tourism industry is far more sustainable and likely to generate far more jobs in the longer term than the Adani Mine will.

But how closer can you get to the proposed mine than the Wangan and Jagalingou people, who plead:

¹ Lissa Johnson, *Policy Online*, 19.8.15).

² Lisa Cox, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20.8.15.

We are the traditional owners of the land in Queensland's Galilee Basin. Coal company Adani wants to use our ancestral lands for their Carmichael coal mine.

If the Carmichael mine were to proceed it would tear the heart out of the land. The scale of this mine means it would have devastating impacts on our native title, ancestral lands and waters, our totemic plants and animals, and our environmental and cultural heritage. It would pollute and drain billions of litres of groundwater, and obliterate important springs systems. It would potentially wipe out threatened and endangered species. It would literally leave a huge black hole, monumental in proportions, where there were once our homelands. These effects are irreversible. Our land will be 'disappeared'.

Nor would the direct impacts be limited to our lands – they would have cascading effects on the neighbouring lands and waters of other Traditional Owners and other landholders in the region. And the mine would cause damage to climate, unleashing a mass of carbon into the atmosphere and propelling dangerous global warming.

(<https://www.communityrun.org/petitions/don-t-let-adani-build-their-huge-coal-mine-on-our-traditional-land>)

The traditional custodians of this continent know how to conserve the land and not exploit it. The eloquent plea from the Wangan and Jagalingou people deserves absolute respect.

Australia's attitude the focus of world condemnation: flying in the face of logic

Tony Abbott has denied climate change, flying in the face not only of the US and the European Union, but also Pope Francis, whose Encyclical should be required reading for everyone, not just members of the Catholic Church (http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf).

Even Lord Deben, a Minister in the Margaret Thatcher 1979–90 Conservative Government, and now head of the UK's climate change authority, points out that the problem of climate change, fossil fuels and the move to renewable energy is not one that only concerns local groups, a skink and snake, or even just Queensland, or Australia. It affects the world:

Australia is changing Britain's climate as we are changing yours. It is not just a national matter. We are all in this together and Mr Abbott is recklessly endangering our future, as he is Australia's. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-08/abbott-endangering-future-on-climate-lord-deben/5582902>

Margaret Thatcher is reported to have been Tony Abbott's political heroine and guiding light. But perhaps he has forgotten that she was one of the first leaders to acknowledge the implications of climate change.

Lord Deben also said:

Global warming won't wait for Mr Abbott and his government. ... Mr Abbott's hubris is staggering. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/12/tony-abbotts-hubris-is-staggering-uks-climate-adviser-on-emissions-target>.

He said Australia's 26% to 28% reduction in emissions by 2030, based on 2005 levels was 'simply not enough'.

Deben, formerly known as John Gummer, said Australia's 'pathetic' target showed it had 'opted out of the greatest physical challenge of our times' and ignored the leadership of US president Barack Obama, the European Union and Pope Francis.

'Australia's friends know she could do so much better than this and all of us abroad will work with all those people who are determined to overturn this irrational decision.'³

³ 'Tony Abbott's hubris is staggering': UK's climate adviser on emissions target', *The Guardian*, 12.8.15:

The *Business Insider* reported Deben's remarks on Abbott, Thatcher, conservatism and climate change:

Lord Deben, chairman of the independent Climate Change Commission and a minister who served in both Margaret Thatcher and Sir John Major's governments, says Abbott has betrayed the underlying ideals of Conservatism and those of his political heroine, Thatcher.

'I have no doubt that people like David Cameron will be saying to Tony Abbott 'Look, conservatives are supposed to conserve, they are supposed to hand on to the next generation something better than they received themselves''.

Tim Yeo, chairman of the UK parliamentary select committee on energy and climate change and a former environment minister under the (Conservative) John Major government, said he was 'very perplexed' by Australia's political stance on climate change.

'If I was Australian, I'd be concerned if my country's economic future and prosperity became dependent on continued coal export.'

Britain's renewable energy production is responsible for producing almost 20% of the country's electricity, while the UK's energy market reforms and efforts to switch to a low carbon economy model have been backed by all the major political parties. <http://www.businessinsider.com.au/a-bunch-of-british-conservatives-slammed-tony-abbotts-stance-on-climate-change-2014-11>

In August, Connie Hedegaard, the former European Commissioner for Climate Action said in Sydney that Abbott government subsidies for the coal industry including the proposed mega-mines of Queensland's Galilee basin would not be 'wise'. Australia and other nations with large coal reserves - such as Germany - had agreed at the G20 and elsewhere to phase out subsidies for fossil fuels. 'It's not enough to say that we want to [cut subsidies]. We have to start doing it ... A good place would be not to have more subsidies for fossil fuels'. Globally, the world is providing \$5 in subsidies for the fossil fuel industry for every dollar spent boosting renewable energy. 'We are subsidising carbon when we say we should go low carbon', she said. 'It's not a wise strategy'. (<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/un-climate-conference/subsidising-adani-coal-rail-link-unwise-exeu-climate-chief-hedegaard-says-20150824-gj6ge5.html#ixzz3jmw4ab4f>)

Ideology

In 2012, the LNP came romped to power in Queensland with an ideology borrowed primarily from the extreme right and the US Tea Party. However, the ideology was not made explicit, and once in power it broke numerous election promises, and implemented policies that caused instant distress in the community.⁴

In 2014, the Coalition in Canberra did much the same thing. And it is the inability of the two conservative governments to convince that the evidence supported the ideology that led Campbell Newman's team, and the Abbott's that led them into difficulties. Economists, environmentalists and many others challenged the 'debt crises' and what Dr Jon Stanford has referred to as 'debt phobia'. The denial of overwhelming international evidence about climate change has been astonishing.

There is an element of desperation in the attacks on people who are going public, exercising their democratic right to question the Abbott government. The Australia Institute, for example, was the victim of a hatchet job for its outspoken commentary on the coal industry (*The Australian*, 22-23 August 2015), in an article that questioned why the Institute can call itself a 'think tank' when its operations are based in Canberra, and then tries to add to the smear by asking where the Institute's funding comes from - some from the unions, some from group donations, and some from 'secret' donors.

⁴ 'The 'Non-negotiable Core Beliefs' of the Tea Party include: 'Illegal aliens are here illegally; Special interests must be eliminated; Government must be downsized; The national budget must be balanced; Deficit spending must end; Bailout and stimulus plans are illegal; Reducing personal income taxes is a must; Reducing business income taxes is mandatory; Political offices must be available to average citizens Intrusive government must be stopped' (The Tea Party, 'About Us', <http://www.teaparty.org/about-us/>)

There is a hollow ring to that line of argument when we are trying to demand transparency from our Canberra-based parliamentarians! The Government is complaining about mass-donation organisations like Get-Up and SumOfUs for bombarding them with getting members to bombard them with emails. Mass submissions is nothing new, it the technology that makes it annoying. But isn't there something buried in there about democracy and citizens' rights?⁵

Jobs vs the environment? No.

As Professor Allan Dale writes in *The Conversation*, it is 'Time for the 'green tape' debate to mature: jobs and the environment are not implacable foes' (25.8.15) <https://theconversation.com/time-for-the-green-tape-debate-to-mature-jobs-and-the-environment-are-not-implacable-foes-46538>).

Prime Minister Abbott claims that the Adani Mine would create 10,000 jobs. This figure was disputed in the Queensland Land Court on 14 May 2015. Lawyers fighting to have Queensland's land court stop the construction of Australia's largest coal mine say they have made the touted economic benefits look 'ridiculous' beside the risk of environmental damage. In a closing statement against the Carmichael mine proposed by Indian coal giant Adani, barrister Saul Holt told the court there had been 'dramatic changes in the picture of this mine' as a result of legal proceedings brought by conservationists.

Holt said cross-examination of Adani's own expert witnesses had revealed the company had 'grossly overstated the jobs and royalties the mine is expected to generate' <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/may/14/adanis-carmichael-mine-damage-far-outweighs-benefits-lawyer-claims>

Jobs should be designed for the future, not the past. Some job losses cause profound distress and yet disappear without notice. As a product of the generation of women who knew they could find jobs as secretaries or in typing pools, I witnessed the era in which computers annihilated the jobs of countless women. Life has adjusted. The previous Queensland government annihilated the jobs of thousands of public servants.

There is a serious problem for the governments having to stimulate employment for the future.

There is Abbott and Hockey's extraordinary attack on wind farms <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-14/chen-the-reason-behind-abbotts-wind-power-policies/6617862>. Surely supporting this industry would be wise job-creation.

Individuals are racing the Government on solar power, installing home solar and anticipating the battery storage that will shortly make them even more independent. Break-throughs in solar energy collection are continuing at a rapid pace. See, for example, 'South African team may have solved solar puzzle even Google couldn't crack' in *The Guardian*, of 25.8.15: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/24/south-african-team-may-have-solved-solar-puzzle-even-google-couldnt-crack>

It is really hard to understand the logic behind committing any future public money into the fossil fuel industry. Votes are leaking across to the Greens. The Canning by-election is already shaping up to be a contest over renewable energy with the solar industry letter-boxing voters urging them to vote against the Liberals and for either Labor, the Greens or the Palmer United Party: <http://>

⁵ In the 1980s I worked for the Queensland Education Department as a policy officer assigned to the secretariat of a public consultation process set up by then Minister Lyn Powell, 'Education 2000'. We received over 3,000 hard copy submissions, the vast majority of which were form submissions organised by a group called STOP & CARE (Society to Outlaw Pornography and Campaign Against Regressive Education). Had they had the technology they would have done what GetUp and others do. But I would make the point to any reader who want to make a submission to Minister Lyneham to write their own. Good, evidence-based arguments are certainly effective. Good policymakers are helped by the evidence.

www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/25/canning-byelection-solar-industry-urges-voters-to-reject-liberals-war-on-solar

The agricultural sector, National Party heartland, is not impressed by expensive subsidies to the mining industry, the destruction of some of our most fertile agricultural land, and apparent government 'capture' by the resources sector. We need to do everything we can to conserve our water supplies and our fertile lands. Surely these should be our priorities.

And remember the words of George Orwell in 1947: 'Political language ... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.' We need politicians to counter the real evidence about climate change with substantiated justifications for putting public money into what look likely to become 'stranded assets' after destroying the environment on the way - without slogans or three-word talking points ...

And if you don't remember Orwell, remember what Dorothea Mackeller said about loving our sunburnt country, the jewel-sea, the beauty and the terror and the wide brown land. It is something we should hand on to our grand-children and their grand-children.