

MACKAY CONSERVATION GROUP

FACT SHEET ON MASSIVE COAL MINING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN THE GALILEE BASIN
Feb 6th 2010

Anna Bligh, Clive Palmer announce multi-billion coal to China deal

By Darren Cartwright From: AAP Feb 6th 2010.

“Ms Bligh said there was some environmental red tape to negotiate before the project was signed off, but unlike the Traveston Dam debacle, she did not next expect any last minute problems.¹”

Premier Bligh has again pre-empted the approval process for a major coal project in Queensland by suggesting that Waratah Coal’s massive development proposed for the Galilee Basin is a done deal, with only the environmental and community impact assessment to be overcome. This reveals the Queensland government’s shameful disrespect for due process in their eagerness to win dirty fossil fuel revenue for State coffers. The impact assessment for Waratah’s development began only late last year, and due to the scale of their proposal it will require years of assessment for it to be at all credible.

Far from being free of environmental and community concerns, all stages of Waratah Coal’s proposal could wreck havoc, from the mine site, through to the rail and port development, its transport through the Great Barrier Reef, and its end use being burnt for energy production in China and contributing significantly to climate change.

“Waratah’s mine will be in the recharge zone of the Great Artesian Basin and it directly threatens around 8000 hectares of remnant woodland on Bimblebox Nature Refuge which could violate the international Convention on Biological Diversity” said Ms Julien, coordinator of the Mackay Conservation Group.

Waratah and Hancock’s mines will be the first of many other huge mining and industrial projects in the Galilee Basin and Northern Economic Triangle. The entire region is covered with mining permits and leases, yet little has been done by the State to monitor environmental values.

“As well as attracting investment in the State it is also the Premier’s responsibility to ensure the land and communities are protected from harm and long-term damage. Our review of these projects, the largest coal mines in the world, show that there will be a huge risk of adverse environmental impacts”

“The mines will be sited in the headwaters of a major river, the Belyando, which could deliver massive contaminated flood flows to the Burdekin Dam waters. Clearing of ecosystems for the mines, railways, pipelines and coal stockpiles will affect thousands of hectares of vegetation, some with high environmental values.”

“A coal-fired power station is proposed north of Alpha and hazardous waste coal ash could also pose a threat to surface and groundwater contamination, including the Great Artesian Basin Aquifer.”

“Eighty coal trainloads a day along the 500 km railway lines for the Waratah and Hancock mines will split grazing properties, stock routes and towns. They will run past a primary school in Collinsville and the township of Merinda near Bowen, and across a nationally listed wetland at Abbot Point. Wastewaters from massive coal stockpiles at Abbot Point will be an ongoing pollution threat to this wetland and the Reef.”

¹ <http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/anna-bligh-clive-palmer-announce-multi-billion-coal-to-china-deal/story-e6frfku0-1225827372738>

² <http://www.acclimatise.uk.com/resources/reports>

“Central Queensland and the Northern Economic Triangle from Bowen to Townsville to Mt. Isa will be getting a Faustian bargain of employment in dirty industries in return for long-term pollution of their water and land and disruptive social change.”

“It’s a regional plan designed by the Queensland Department of Infrastructure and Planning. Its economic development focus is entirely dependent on fossil fuels - coal mining, coal seam gas, underground coal gasification and shale oil. It will mean exporting billions of tonnes of carbon pollution to Asia. Token efforts in Queensland such as changing our light bulbs will do little to offset this.”

“Over dependence a single revenue stream, from fossil fuels, comes at the expense of protecting communities, the reef, tourism, agriculture, grazing industries and development of alternative industries.