



# THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES

16 years young, and FREE

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## 2000MW = BIG SOLAR

The Tweed Renewables Alliance has been formed to campaign for Big Solar. Three community groups, the Caldera Environment Centre, Northern Rivers Guardians and Tweed Climate Action Now, have joined together to form the Alliance. Representing around 500 members, the Alliance wants to see Australia commit to building large scale solar by the end of 2012. Members of the Alliance gathered around Fingal Head lighthouse to form a model of a concentrating solar thermal plant, with the lighthouse representing the solar tower.

"Renewable energy is cleaner and safer than energy from coal and gas. What's more, large-scale solar power is cheaper than gas, will create more jobs in regional Australia, and as shown in Spain and the US, can provide base load power," spokesperson Yasir Assam said.

"2000MW of coal-fired plants are due to retire. If we replace these with gas we lock ourselves into the global gas market for decades and we will be subject to price shocks and rising power bills. This has special relevance for the Northern Rivers, as some of that gas will come from the coal seam gas mines that threaten our local community."

The campaign aims to poll 10,000 people face-to-face to gauge support for Big Solar. The Big Solar Poll will be launched at the Imperial Hotel in Murwillumbah on Wednesday 14 March at 7pm. Half hour talks will be given by Al-Gore trained local GP Dr. Fiona McCormick, and Dr Paul Taylor author of "The Biochar Revolution", for an update on

the latest on climate science and 100% renewable energy. This will be followed by a group discussion on the Big Solar Poll. The results of the poll will be taken to local MP Justine Elliot in early May.

"Sunlight is clean, free and lasts forever, and on the sunniest continent on earth, it makes sense to bypass gas and go straight to solar. We are calling on Justine Elliot and the energy minister to ensure that 2000MW of Big Solar projects will be committed to by the end of 2012," Mr Assam said.

The Clean Energy Bill of 2011 set up the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) with \$10 billion to fund clean energy projects and \$3.3 billion to help individuals and community organisations transition to cleaner energy use. Part of the agreement was that native forests were to be protected from being burnt as woodchips. Rob Oakeshott MP has reneged on this aspect of the deal and there is a risk that some of the 'clean energy' funding will go into logging and burning native forests. Energy minister Martin Ferguson is looking at around 50% of the money in the fund being invested in new gas fired power stations and 50% of those will be running on coal seam gas.

The investment mandate of this fund is still being decided so the Big Solar Poll has been set up to survey community attitudes to renewable energy. The aim is to give this information to our decision makers before they finalise the investment breakdown of the CEFC and ensure that the money in this fund is spent solely on truly renewable energy.

## Northern Rivers... or Northern Gasfields?



by Sue Stock

"Do you want to live in the Northern Rivers or the Northern Gasfields?"

Dr Wayne Somerville asked the audience. "CSG is a massive radical act of vandalism. No government has sought a mandate at an election. Northern Rivers is in a state like the lull before the storm. We have to learn from Queensland's tragedy. Our fate is not yet determined. The Northern Rivers is where we stop it," the local psychologist said.

More than 800 people packed the auditorium at the Lismore Workers Club to hear about CSG mining on March 1st. The meeting was chaired by Paul Hobbs from Kyogle who informed the audience that the current legislation on CSG mining is outdated and we were urged to email, write or phone our state member, Thomas George and Premier Barry O'Farrell.

The attendees warmly welcomed East Lismore Indigenous elder, Reggie King from the Bundjalung Nation. Reggie said, "This CSG business is terrible for our country and for us. These lands used to be the land of milk and honey. If we let this go, it will be a gas land and toxic". Reggie grew up at Cubawee Mission, Tuncester.

Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham said, "The CSG industry is a huge risk and it is the community's right to say no. This industry will put at risk agriculture and tourism. These are the long-term industries that will sustain the Northern Rivers into the future. Putting those industries at risk for 20 years of profits to largely foreign owned companies makes no sense." Buckingham also observed that the current paradigm in parliament is that "any industry is a good industry".

"The Greens are committed to standing with the community in this fight for their land, water and future," Mr Buckingham said. "The Greens have introduced a CSG Moratorium Bill into the NSW Parliament which is due to be voted on next week, but both the government and the ALP seem set to vote down the legislation."

"We are the second most visited area in NSW after Sydney and the Blue Mountains. They are coming to see our pristine environment not our gas wells," Lismore mayor Jenny Dowell said.

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