

The Alternative Journal of the Rainbow Region



# THE NIMBIN GOODTIMES

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Lemon Myrtle Edition  
January 2016  
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# Metgasgone! But no room for complacency

by Scott Sledge, president of Northern Rivers Guardians

A busload of activists from the Northern Rivers travelled to Sydney for the 16th December AGM of Metgasco, which ultimately voted to sell its licences in our region and leave NSW. That completes a buy-back of all licences to explore for gas in our region. Hooray to that!

A few weeks earlier, representatives of 195 nations gathered in Paris and unanimously agreed to end the Fossil Fuel Age and go renewable, so I suggested Metgasco could change its objective from gas to renewable electricity. One of our guys gave them a new name suggestion: MetSunCo. If they take up those suggestions, the shareholders might finally get some money back on their investment.

Metgasco CEO Peter Henderson said the company would invest in some other gas project in some other state. I believe that no one will try to frack the Northern Rivers for a very long time. NSW politicians have heard us and know there is no way we'll accept a gasfield development here.

It has been quite a journey. Now we can look back at the past four years with a sense of achievement. Good on you all for what you each did, whether a lot or a little. Victory has ten thousand fathers. It was our community standing together: men and women, gays and straights, farmers and environmentalists, new settlers and old, bushies and townfolk, schoolkids, musos, nurses and nannas, Origines and immigrants from all over the world who have chosen to make this their



Guardian Angels celebrate at Byron Bay Photo: Keith Bale

home. Through protests and street parades, fundraising, petitions, letters, songs and blockades, we convinced the gas ghouls to take their dastardly schemes and leave our region.

Gasfield-free neighbourhood surveys and the 2012 Lismore referendum proved that we represented the vast majority of the population and we could claim

a mandate for protecting our environment and lifestyles through the Lock the Gate Alliance. The world is still conflicted, and we need to continue to protect our future and to join with others to make a sustainable future with renewable technologies. Gas projects still threaten many parts of Australia and coal is a dangerous dinosaur thrashing its tail through

our ecosystems, with politicians pretending that pollution is actually good for us... really!

We celebrate the realisation of the dream of a community-owned alternative energy company in the Northern Rivers. After a three-month fundraising campaign, Enova Energy has announced our community has subscribed \$3.8 M to its share offer and the company

will start operating in 2016. The Farming the Sun Project is also set to create solar power farms on a commercial scale in Lismore. Check their websites.

Wildlife is under threat – especially the Tweed and Ballina coastal koalas – along with the ecosystems which support all life. We must continue to take care of our part of the planet.

We have had quite a lot of success in 2015 with the Divest/Invest campaign. With the fate of the Great Barrier Reef hanging in the balance, I encourage everyone to find out if their investments/superannuation are involved with promoting fossil fuels. There are lots of ethical alternatives. I suggest credit unions for ordinary transactions and Australian Ethical Investment for super and long-term investments.

Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt continues to support coal mining. Adani is an Indian company with a terrible record of environmental devastation and their proposed Carmichael mine would open up the world's largest coal export facilities along the Queensland coast. Dredging would likely finish the Great Barrier Reef.

Due to people power, 15 major banks have refused finance for this devastating venture and I think we can stop it. Probably only lack of finance will bury this dinosaur, but please contact politicians at all levels anyway. Please take a little time this holiday season to let your financial institutions know how strongly you feel. Get ethical and go renewable.

Celebrate a gasfield-free future: You've earned it!

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