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FOSSIL FOOLS MINERS STILL OWN GOVT

by Aidan Ricketts

Despite the best efforts of communities all across Australia to make it clear to governments state and federal that we no longer want ongoing investment in new coal, it appears that the Federal government and to a slightly lesser extent, the Federal opposition are still completely drunk on mining industry Kool-Aid.

We have seen the absurd spectacle of government ministers waving around lumps of coal in the Federal parliament as record heat waves struck four capital cities.

The battle against coal seam gas mining has been going somewhat more positively for our communities in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, but there is still a long way to go. In New South Wales, Santos is still threatening to reboot its disastrous Pilliga coal seam gas project, which could see serious pollution of the Great Artesian Basin.

In the Northern Territory, shale gas mining and tight sand gas mining leases cover up to two thirds of the territory, including important and stunningly beautiful, cultural and tourist locations like Mataranka.

Largely through the work of the Lock the Gate Alliance nationally, communities in Australia are united in their voice that they do not want coal seam gas and that they do not want investment in new coal.

Unfortunately Australia has over 60 years of history of the fossil fuel industry embedding itself into our parliaments via the major political



Protest for divestment outside Lismore's Westpac branch Photo: Sue Stock

parties and the massive political donations that the fossil fuel industry provides.

Coal mining industry Kool-Aid that is served by lobbyists in Canberra to our major party politicians certainly appears to be a mind-altering substance. The idea that we need more coal to fuel more air-conditioners during record heat waves as a solution to the weather extremes that we are facing, is an irony verging on tragedy.

If we look over to the United States however, the picture is much worse. The Trump administration is absolutely firmly in bed with the fossil fuel industry. The oil industry and the climate denial that it has promoted with its billions of dollars of money for disinformation over

the last few decades, the escalation of the American military under Trump and the prospect of an unnecessary war would also be a disaster for our climate, yet a boon for the oil and fossil fuel sector.

Here in Australia we face the prospect of the world's largest ever coalmine being constructed in the Galilee Basin by the questionable international company Adani. The Queensland Labor government and the Federal LNP government are both complicit in offering tax payer-funded subsidies to enable this outrageous and unnecessary operation to proceed.

Most major banks and investment houses are quite clear that there is very little future left in coal mining and in particular in large-

scale greenfield coalmining, yet our governments continue to waste tax payers' money to promote these operations, while deliberately starving the burgeoning renewables energy industry that could bring climate relief and so many jobs and prosperity to regional areas.

It is not just coal industry subsidisation and political corruption we are looking at. It is bold-faced industry protectionism, protecting an old and dying industry from a new, cleaner and necessary industry.

Not only are we seeing the madness of providing subsidies and public money for a new big mine, but also seeing the madness of this idea of clean coal. Clean coal is as big an oxymoron as dry water. It is

only less dirty coal perhaps at best than what we already have, yet it is being sold as a way of wasting renewable energy funds.

The addiction that Australian politicians have to the building of mines is an economic insanity. The addiction is like a pyramid or Ponzi scheme because it is only the construction phase of mines which produces the temporary jobs boom that the politicians seek so eagerly, not the production phase which employs very few people particularly in a declining coal market. It is economic madness as well as a climate crime.

Fortunately resistance is being organised to the Adani mine all over Australia, including in our region. Groups are gathering for non-violent direct action training. It may not be possible to get tens of thousands of people to the Galilee Basin, but hopefully thousands will be able to go there for direct action if required.

In the meantime we need to disperse the direct action across the nation and across the states to target secondary businesses that would be involved in this crime and this madness if it were to take place.

Non-violent direct action training workshops are being planned for the Lismore and Northern Rivers region, so please keep your ear to the ground for when these workshops will occur, for what you can do and how you can help the national campaign against the Adani mine and the fight against the madness of coal industry corruption across Australia in both of our major political parties, and particularly in our Federal parliament.

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