



23rd December 2018

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Herein attached is our amended submission to your Inquiry: Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018 from the Bayside Climate Change Action Group. Since its first lodgement, we have received requests from several partner groups wishing to endorse the submission and to have their endorsement noted.

The endorsing groups include:

- Centre for Climate Safety
- Stop Adani Geelong
- ClimActs
- Dandenong Ranges Renewable Energy Association (DRREA)
- Locals into Victoria's Environment (LIVE)
- Kooyong Climate Change Alliance

The amended submission contains in the *Preamble*, reference to the above climate action groups requesting to have their endorsement recorded.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Sincerely,

David Rothfield (President)

David Williams (Vice President)

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Submission to the Inquiry Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018

21 December 2018

This submission is made by the Bayside Climate Change Action Group (BCCAG) with the endorsement of several Melbourne metropolitan climate action groups. Together, we represent several thousand concerned citizens. The endorsements come from The Centre for Climate Safety, Stop Adani Geelong, ClimActs, Dandenong Ranges Renewable Energy Association (DRREA), Locals into Victoria's Environment (LIVE) and Kooyong Climate Change Alliance.

Our concern relates to the increasing risk of unchecked global warming. Recent reports issued by the IPCC and other scientific bodies confirm that Australia as well as other developed countries are moving much too slowly to achieve even the modest targets they have established to contain global warming to what they regard as acceptable limits. These modest targets in turn, will be insufficient to achieve the goals of the Paris Climate Accords. There is mounting social pressure, particularly from young people, on governments, for them to step up and take decisive action to reduce national GHG emissions across all sectors of the economy.

Summary

Development of coal mining in the Galilee Basin increases the risk of runaway climate change to unacceptable levels. Such risks have become increasingly apparent over the last 3 years since Australia signed on to the Paris Climate Accord.

Such developments would also pose unacceptable risks both to groundwater resources on which farmers depend and very likely on nationally significant desert oases that appear to rely on these same aquifers. Furthermore, the transportation of coal from the basin to export markets via Abbot Point through the Great Barrier Reef poses a great risk to a range of environmental and economic assets.

Introduction

Evidence of climate change in Australia and around the world abounds. Over the last 5 years, we have experienced a succession of weather records in terms of hottest year, both in Australia and globally. We have experienced record breaking drought, record breaking storms and floods and record breaking wildfire events. We have witnessed record breaking ocean temperatures inducing repeated coral bleaching and the death of entire coral reefs which nurture entire marine eco-systems¹. All of the above phenomena are consistent with climate change and are predicted to become more and more extreme over the course of this century.

Queensland, the home state of the proposed Galilee Basin thermal coal development has been bearing the brunt of many such extreme events, including record drought, record bushfire events and record coral bleaching events. Given the

link between the burning of coal and climate change, we might ask whether Queensland has more to gain or to lose if Galilee coal extraction is permitted to proceed.

Meeting Global Demand

Much is made by the mining industry of the need to supply coal to an expanding global coal market, particularly in SE Asia. Such claims are erroneous on 2 counts and ignore the impact that climate change risk is having on decision makers. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts the global coal demand to remain stable over the next 5 years, notwithstanding a small increase in demand in 2018, after a period of stagnationⁱⁱ. An increase in Indian demand is offsetting declines elsewhere. However, the rate of growth in demand in India is reported to be slowing due to ‘the large-scale expansion of renewables’. India is promoting a massive roll out of small scale solar grids for rural communities, rather than the slower and more costly connection to urban based large scale grids fed by coalⁱⁱⁱ. An in-depth analysis of the likely demand for Carmichael coal from India says, ‘it might shift a few tons of (relatively) good coal to India before India shuts down imports entirely’^{iv}. Given the ongoing delay that Adani is experiencing, the forecast of a shutdown, made 20 months ago is even closer today than then.

Impact on Global Warming

As more and more countries, sub-national jurisdictions and businesses take the threat of global warming seriously, the global demand for coal is forecast to decrease in the long term, as it did during the two-year period 2015 - 2016. The price of coal has become increasingly volatile since it last peaked in 2011. Renewable energy has become increasingly competitive with conventional energy generation. Both India and China, large importers of Australia’s coal are rapidly increasing their investment in renewable energy and moving to reduce their coal imports.

With the above in mind, the addition of coal from the Galilee Basin to the global market must put further downward pressure on the price of coal^v. Cheaper coal will delay the introduction of alternative clean energy at a time when governments are attempting to hasten the introduction of renewables. Thus, the assumed profits from Galilee coal will be made on the back of our export of carbon emissions, delaying the transition to a clean energy based economy elsewhere.

Even though coal exports may not be included in Australia’s National Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory, Australia, by its national policy omission, may be responsible for a critical delay in the global energy transition to renewables. A further perverse outcome would be the weakening of markets for existing coal fields, both in NSW and Queensland.

Impact on Water Sources

Adani is competing with farmers for limited water resources and has misrepresented the impact of its requested water licence on water supply^{vi}. It has also attempted to hide the risk its demand would pose to the nationally significant desert oasis, Doongmabulla Springs^{vii}.

The government is currently facing a court challenge over its failure to apply the water trigger to the granting of a water licence to Adani^{viii}.

Impact on coastal environments

Coal from the Galilee Basin must be transported hundreds of kilometres by an as yet unbuilt rail link to the Abbot Point coal terminal. From there it is to be loaded on ships that must transit the Great Barrier Reef. Each of the above 3 steps poses significant environmental risks.

The only existing element in this transportation chain has already shown its susceptibility to accident and consequent environmental pollution. As cyclone Debbie headed for the Queensland coast in March 2017, Adani knew it would need to pollute wetlands around its Abbot Point Terminal. Only later was it revealed that Adani knew the extent of the pollution was much greater than it was ready to admit^{ix}.

The events of March 2017 are not unique. Such extreme events are predicted to become more and more extreme over time. The pollution that occurred was at a time when the terminal was operating well below the capacity at which it would operate should the Carmichael Mine become operational. If that happens, the risk of even greater pollution during more extreme storm events would be all the greater.

The increase in ship traffic through the Reef will lead to increased risk of accidents with oil and coal spills within the Reef system. Such risks impose yet another source of pollution and stress on an already overstressed natural treasure.

Trustworthiness of the licence holder

Even before final approvals have been granted, Adani has been found guilty of at least one breach of its licence conditions pertaining to discharging polluted water from Abbot Point and has allegedly carried out on-site aquifer dewatering exercises without the necessary approvals^{xxi}. Adani's Australia CEO was the CEO of a Zambia mining company found guilty of serious environmental offences, a fact not disclosed in Adani's bid for the Carmichael mine licence^{xii}. With such an ongoing record of breaching conditions and disregard for the environment, the trustworthiness of the licence holder to abide by conditions and promises made must be questioned. If irreversible environmental damage is found to have occurred as a result of any such breaches, whether to the artesian basin on which farmers rely, the Doongmabulla

Springs, the Caley Valley Wetlands or the Great Barrier Reef, merely bringing the licence holder to court after the fact will not redress such irreversible damage

Conclusion

We are the last generation that can do something to stop this relentless spiral into catastrophic climate change, and environmental degradation. Sir David Attenborough recently said, “If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon”. Addressing world leaders, he also said, “Leaders of the world, you must lead. The continuation of our civilisations, and the natural world upon which we depend, is in your hands”.

We urge the Senate to adopt the Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018.

References

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 - ⁱⁱ <https://www.iea.org/newsroom/news/2018/december/global-coal-demand-set-to-remain-stable-through-2023-despite-headwinds.html>
 - ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/invest-small-scale-solar-market-india-usicef#gs.1roel10>
 - ^{iv} <https://reneweconomy.com.au/fact-check-is-australian-coal-really-cleaner-than-indian-coal-and-does-it-even-matter-76430/>
 - ^v <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-09/adanis-carmichael-mine-will-cause-global-coal-price-drop-report/8505564>
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 - ^{vii} <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-21/adani-groundwater-plan-risks-permanent-damage-to-desert-springs/9569184>
 - ^{viii} <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-04/adani-water-licence-acf-court-challenge/10582602>
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 - ^x <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-12/adani-groundwater-bores-investigated-by-queensland-department/10231752>
 - ^{xi} https://www.facebook.com/GetUpAustralia/videos/672386406481234/?video_source=permalink
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