



CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

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The Premier of Queensland
<premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au>

cc The Hon Tony Burke
<Tony.Burke.MP@environment.gov.au>

Dear Premier

Waratah Coal's mining proposal for the Bimblebox Nature Refuge near Alpha in Queensland.

Preamble

The Clarence Environment Centre has maintained a shop-front in Grafton for over 22 years, and has been closely involved with local, region, national, and even international environmental issues, particularly those relating to inappropriate zoning that leads to unacceptable environmental degradation.

The Centre is also the regional coordinator of the national "Land for Wildlife" program which is a non-binding conservation agreement for landowners who wish to dedicate their properties for wildlife habitat protection.

Such conservation agreements are a critical component in the nation's network of conservation reserves, particularly in the face of climate change, as species migrate to escape the higher temperatures brought on by global warming.

Climate change

We now know that the burning of fossil fuels is the major source greenhouse gas emissions, and if there is one fuel that tops the most polluting list, it is coal. This filthy substance drove the industrial revolution, and since then has caused the premature deaths of millions of people around the world. That situation continues today, with life expectancy, and respiratory problems, in coal producing areas such as the NSW Hunter valley, markedly lower than the rest of the country.

It has also been well known, for at least 30 years, that a failure to lower carbon dioxide emissions will ultimately lead to catastrophic climate change that will make it impossible for mankind to survive. However, despite the Hawke Government setting emissions reduction targets almost a quarter of a century ago, emissions in Australia continue to rise. This is also the case internationally, driven in a major part by burning of coal from the world's largest exporter, Australia.

Another major factor driving climate change is deforestation which, despite some regulation to control land clearing being put in place, continues at an alarming rate, with government agencies, such as the timber managers in NSW, being one of the worst offenders.

In conclusion

The Queensland Government is considering a proposal by Waratah Coal to mine the Bimblebox Nature Refuge near Alpha for coal, a mine that will see some 4,000 hectares of a dedicated conservation reserve, that was partially funded by the Federal Government on the condition that it was preserved in perpetuity. We find the situation, where this highly biodiverse tract of natural bushland can be reduced to a massive polluted crater, completely unacceptable.

We believe the approval of this project, which is largely driven by corporate greed, would be a reckless disregard for the future of our children and grandchildren, and must be brought under control. Governments around the country regularly justify such projects because they create jobs, a cynical vote grabbing exercise by leaders that think nothing of slashing their own labour forces by the thousands. It's happening right now in NSW.

The billion dollars the government coffers will receive in royalties from the proposed new mine, must be tempered by the fact that this is a non-renewable resource. It should also be put into perspective by pointing out that, while \$1 billion sounds a lot, it will build only a paltry 15km of new motorway.

The jobs will not last forever, nor the flow of money. Much of the big money from mining our publicly owned resources goes overseas to owners and shareholders, and by the time the resource runs out, the royalties will have been spent to fund popular programs to help the reelection prospects of the government in power, and Australia will have nothing but a polluted landscape to show for it.

We believe this project, and the damage it will cause in both the short and long term, is unthinkable. The State and Federal Governments should be focused on developing clean renewable energy, starting now. That is where the future lies, and we earnestly believe that a failure to pursue that future will likely lead to no future at all.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment

Yours sincerely,
John Edwards
Honorary Secretary.