

Support for the **Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018**

While Australian Federal governments of different political ideologies have been disputing the shape of policies to tackle Australia's emissions over the last decade, the world has grown warmer by the year, weather events such as droughts, bush fires and cyclones have become ever more extreme and the world's oceans warmer and hence more acidic. Our treasured Great Barrier Reef has been subjected to greater stresses by the year and is struggling to survive in the short term, let alone the long term.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC¹, at the end of 2018, has affirmed yet again the need for governments all around the world to take concerted action to reduce carbon emissions much more drastically in order to avoid temperature increases of more than 1.5 degrees, and still our major Federal political parties cling on to the promised wealth that comes to Australia from coal exports.

The plan to mine the Galilee Basin hangs in the balance. The water triggers that should have alerted the Coalition to the dangers of allowing the proposed Adani coal mine to drawn down enormous quantities of water have failed to gain the attention of our current Minister for the Environment, Melissa Price, while the Queensland Labor government has allocated this mega mine sixty years of unlimited free water for its operations, and the prospect of generous royalty holidays to encourage the mine's construction.²

How can this be possible in a world that estimates water as the most precious resource of the future, the resource that may, sadly, spark future wars? The lure of export dollars is real, but the need to preserve our precious water resources for Australian farmers and the Australian people now, and for future generations, exerts a far greater pull. When those easy export dollars are spent and the wetlands of the Great Artesian Basin are drained, devastating not only agriculture but our rich biodiversity, who will take the blame for this most reckless sacking of Australia's true wealth?

Southern Cross University researcher in Geochemistry, Ellen Moon, gave a sobering account of the implications of the water licences granted to the Adani coal mine proposal in her excellent article entitled *Why does the Carmichael coal mine need to use so much water?* in <http://theconversation.com/why-does-the-carmichael-coal-mine-need-to-use-so-much-water-75923>³, published in The Conversation on 13 April 2017. It focuses not on the amount of water such a mine would use as the detrimental effect it would have on water pressure in the Great Artesian Basin, where water levels have dropped by 80 metres on 1915 levels and 1/3 of all artesian bores have stopped flowing altogether. She also pointed out the catastrophic effects that this loss of water pressure has on the natural environment, especially desert springs.

¹ <https://unfccc.int/topics/science/workstreams/cooperation-with-the-ipcc/ipcc-special-report-on-globalwarming-of-15-degc>

² <http://www.tai.org.au/content/taxpayers-foot-bill-secret-adani-deals>

³ <http://theconversation.com/why-does-the-carmichael-coal-mine-need-to-use-so-much-water-75923>

Enthusiastic supporters of coal mines in the Galilee Basin would do well to read her paper and reconsider the wisdom of placing our fragile inland water system at further risk in an era of accelerating climate change.



Figure 1 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-03/doongmabulla-springs-in-central-north-queensland/10067182>

The Doongmabulla Springs (pictured above), sacred to the Wangan and Jagalingou⁴ people, would be seriously affected and very likely lost to all Australians if the Adani coal mine were to go ahead. These indigenous people have had to take their fight to preserve their spiritual and cultural heritage to the United Nations, a move that should be quite unnecessary in terms of their land rights protections. This site may be far from the centres of financial and political power in Australia but is equally deserving of protection as any historical or heritage site in any capital city.

The Member for Maiwar Mr Michael Berkman's bill deserves the support of all far-sighted and responsible ministers. Opening up the Galilee Basin to coal mining- a move that represents spending an enormous 15% it is estimated of the whole world's future carbon budget (the

⁴ <https://gci.uq.edu.au/we-are-people-land>. See *High noon in the Galilee: Wangan and Jagalingou law and order*, 29 May, 2018.

volume of emissions that can be added to the atmosphere before we reach total climate catastrophe) is a step too far that our political leaders must not take.

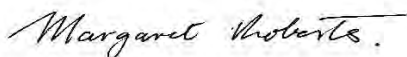
Australia has to say “No” to new coal mines because ignoring the clear science which points to catastrophe is not just unethical but economically disastrous in the long term. No job, no miraculous pouring in of export dollars to win votes can justify such reckless behaviour. New jobs outside coal will be created- they are already being created- and Australia has to take up its rightful position at the head of enlightened thought and practice on energy, not at its cringing, tail-end of wilful climate change deniers.

If any more reasons for leaving coal in the ground were needed, note Bill McKibben’s tweet quoting the New York Times, 21/1/2019 “New study: ice melt in Greenland accelerating so quickly that we may have crossed a ‘tipping point’” @billmckibben. Every extra tonne of coal burnt makes our climate future so much worse, so in order to save ourselves from an even greater catastrophe we need to move urgently away from mining fossil fuels to cleaner jobs in renewable energy.

Labor’s Mark Butler in a recent article⁵ entitled *Labor vows \$1bn plan to ‘supercharge’ renewable energy* (The Australian, January 22 2019) has outlined the potential for the export of hydrogen to Japan and other developed countries for use in generating the electricity they need. He makes a strong point of the fact that Japan will only accept hydrogen sourced from renewable energy after 2030. Tellingly, the plan is focused on Gladstone which is known for its very high rate of unemployment.

The ferocity of the spate of Queensland bushfires in the final two months of 2018 must have underscored the severity of the situation for ordinary Queenslanders and politicians alike. More thermal coal mined in the Galilee Basin then burned around the world means a hotter planet, intolerably warm oceans and the exacerbation of droughts, floods and all manner of climate extremes.

I strongly support the **Mineral Resources (Galilee Basin) Amendment Bill 2018** and thank Mr Michael Berkman, Member for Maiwar, for this critical bill which, if enacted, will make a substantial contribution towards a safer climate future for us all.



Margaret Roberts

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⁵ <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/labor-vows-1bn-hydrogen-plan-to-supercharge-renewable-industry/news-story/ee8d830dfc18db2364ae0360890618cc>